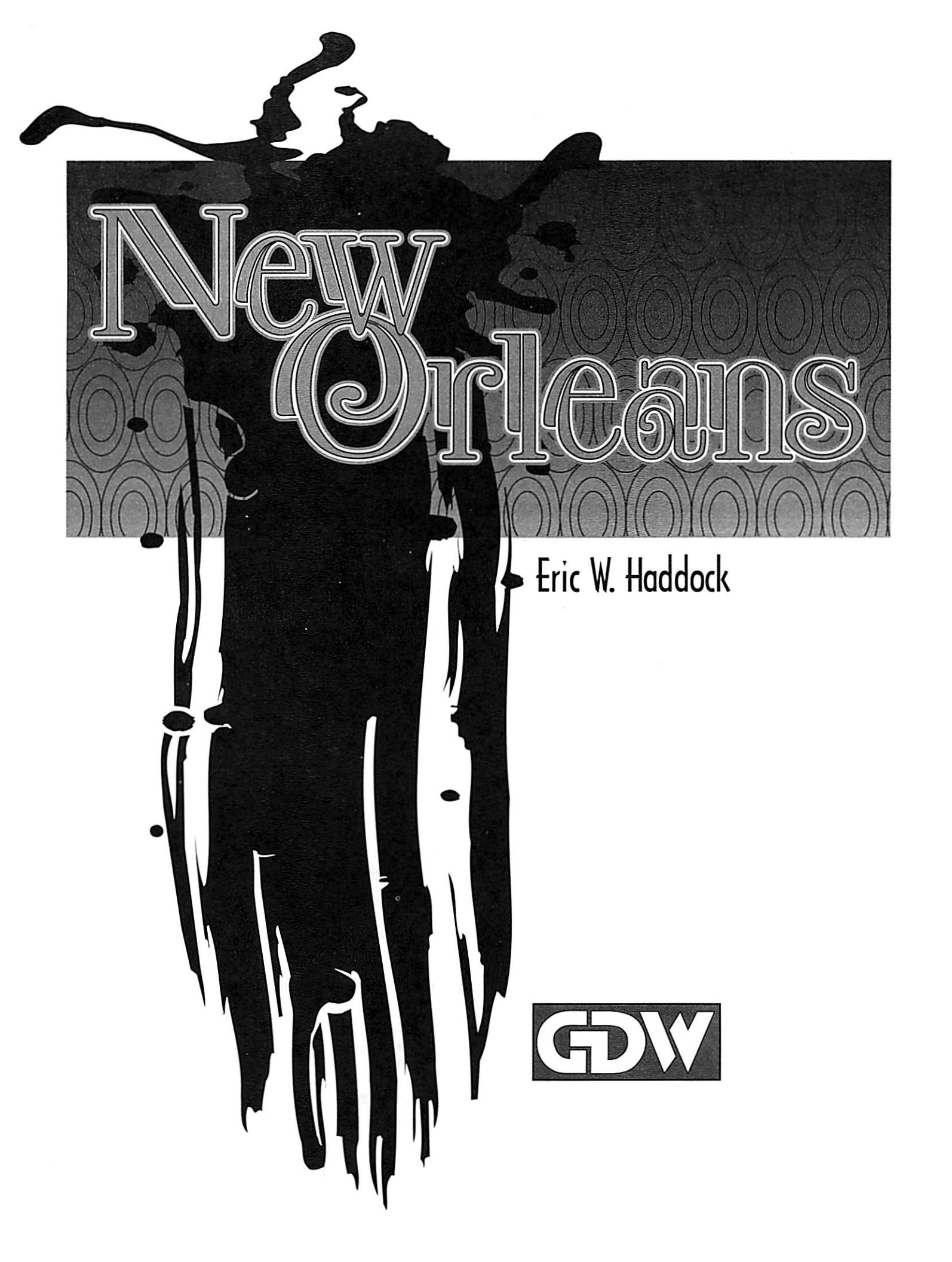


NEW ORLEANS™

Eric W.
Haddock



GDW



New Orleans

Eric W. Haddock

GDW



*To my parents, Gary and Lonnette,
To Julia, who helped in immeasurable ways,
To Paul, Shane and Jeff for the decade,
To William John Wheeler, my lighthouse, and
To Phillip Anderson and his companions, who saved the day and
changed my life.*

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New Orleans

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NEW ORLEANS



Louis Rogers left the delivery office \$50 lighter but relieved. The letter he sent would be delivered—not for a few weeks, but it would get to his friends, the only people who could help him.

He stood in the sun on the sidewalk, letting the crowd muscle past him. He took off his shirt and let his skin suffocate in the humid air. As he looked toward the bus station, the walls of the buildings along the sidewalk danced and snaked in the heat waves pouring up from the street. In his haste to get to the delivery office, he had forgotten to wear some sun-block and a hat, a very bad mistake. Now he felt like the top of his head was going to melt and slide off his skull. His skin was already turning into red sand. Putting on his sunglasses, he started to walk to the station.

The crowd was especially thick today. Even with

the extreme heat and humidity, no one seemed deterred from roaming the streets. Passing by an alley, Lou heard a terrible moan. Glancing into it, he saw a prole curled up next to a dumpster. Clearly, the prole had been sick and lying there for days. Even from this distance, Lou could see that some parts of him had been eaten away by rats and other creatures. A few of the rodents lay dead next to him. Then Lou winced, because he knew what had killed the rats. It was inside the prole's flesh, and Lou had helped put it there.

He walked on, trying to put it out of his mind. A thick hand patted him on his right shoulder. "Mr. Rogers?" The voice was incredibly clear and very sharp.

Lou turned and saw a tall man in a trench coat and large hat.



A trench coat? How can he possibly stand it, *Lou asked himself.*

"Uh, yeah, that's me."

"I'd like to speak with you. It's very important. It's about Lake Maurepas."

Lou almost took a step back. The surprise in his face was obvious.

"Sure, sure. Let's step in here for a second."

Lou guided his companion into the alley. They stood on the far side of the dumpster, away from the dying prole.

"Before we start, I need to know your name."

The prole was suddenly aware of a series of loud grunts. It shook him from his delirium long enough for him to hear more. There were a few loud cracks and...something more. The prole couldn't place it. He hadn't heard anything like it before.

A few people on the street looked into the alley. The prole looked back, and they quickly turned away.

As abruptly as the sounds started, they stopped. The prole laid his head back down and went back to looking at the dead rats around him.

Before he closed his eyes for another spell of delirium, he was aware of something hot and wet along his hand. He looked down at it and saw a trickle of blood running to him from underneath the dumpster.

THE ADVENTURE

In this adventure the player characters respond to a plea for help from a past friend (or contact, as the case may be), Lou Rogers. The characters arrive in New Orleans and find their friend has disappeared.

The plot revolves around their quest for clues. The trail takes them from the middle-class sections of New Orleans to the corporate high-rises to the deepest swamps around New Orleans. On their way, they encounter two evil factions fighting for control, and have to contend with the impoverished and resentful local population.

SYNOPSIS

Read the following only if you are the one who is going to be running the adventure. Otherwise,

stop reading and don't spoil the fun!

There is more to the adventure than the players coping with sewer monsters and disgruntled locals. There is a terrible source of evil deep in the heart of the swamp outside New Orleans which is transforming the environment to its own tastes. It is also taking over Cajuns and other humans to use as its servants. Among the people it has taken over are a few corporate executives. By using these people to manipulate their companies, the creature is able to get a constant supply of bodies to use for a dark purpose: acquisition of power. With these servants bringing in more people to be enslaved, there is almost no limit to how many bodies it can acquire.

However, there are some individuals who are aware of the evil influence within the companies in New Orleans. They are also aware of the nature of the creature behind the evil. They are trying their own means to eradicate the heart of evil by contaminating the vegetation in the swamp by pumping in tons of pesticide into the water systems near New Orleans. The fact that this water also serves New Orleans itself is not a concern for them.

Unfortunately, the player characters are unable to call upon the company fighting the evil in the swamp for help. That company, Norleans BioChem, is also controlled by Dark Minions pursuing their own twisted goals.

These two factions, each with a lot of power, are struggling for control of the New Orleans populace. The evil in the swamp wants power by taking direct control of thousands of minds; the insectoids running Norleans BioChem want bodies to feed themselves and their grubs and to use the power of the company to manipulate humanity into a more pliable herd.

The characters in this story are caught in the middle. As they investigate New Orleans, they will find a graphic representation of the struggle in the sewers of New Orleans, where the two environments clash for control. As they investigate further, they will realize that the two powers are fighting each other—and they may start fighting the characters.

A LETTER FROM LOU

My friend,

You've got to help me. I've gotten myself into something that I don't think I can get myself out of.

I started to work for a chemical company called Orleans BioChem. I drive tanker trucks for them. A few weeks ago, we started to make deliveries to a pumping station near Lake Maurepas, a lake near New Orleans. We started to dump pesticide into the lake by the ton. The deliveries there started out small, but have grown into daily trips.

At first I didn't say anything. I didn't care—I was lucky to have the job. But, I started to see things going on in the city. People have started to act strangely, and I've got this headache that just won't go away. Lots of people are on edge. It seems hotter this year than any other.

I didn't connect all this to the pesticide until I found out that Lake Maurepas provides a lot of drinking water for New Orleans. We've been dumping pesticide into our own drinking water! It's not being filtered out at all.

I had a crisis of conscience, then decided to tell my supervisor about everything that was going on. People are being contaminated, and they don't even know it. She didn't care, so I went higher. No one listened to me—no one cared.

I was going to let it drop, but now I've had my house broken into twice. Strange cars are parked in the neighborhood. People are getting more and more crazy here in the city, but incidents are too isolated for anyone to recognize what's going on. It's gotten so bad that the hospitals are turning sick people away.

I can see the whole picture. Something really big is going on, and I've figured out what it is. But I need some help with this right away, because I've got this feeling I'm being followed...

Lou Rogers



ABOUT LOU

Lou had been having terrible dreams since he had started making those deliveries to the lake. Sure, the lake provided drinking water for nearly all of New Orleans' people—everyone outside the corporate walls that is—but that didn't prevent Lou's employer from dumping pure pesticide into it. Lou had the misfortune of having a conscience and driving one of the tanker trucks filled with pesticide.

Shortly after he started his delivery, he actually got up enough nerve to protest. All he did was raise the question: "Should we be doing this?" His manager ignored him, as did everyone else in the company he told.

No one listened to him—except for one or two individuals...

Louis Rogers grew up in Louisiana and has been a resident of New Orleans for 20 years. During that time, he has held a number of jobs, all of which involved delivery in some fashion. His longest position was as a truck driver hauling cargo between Chicago, St. Louis and New Orleans. Since the Greater Depression, however, nearly all of the trucking companies Lou worked for have gone out of business. So, Lou became an independent driver for a few years, but found the expenses and danger too great.

It was during one of those independent years of trucking that Lou met one of the PCs. He was in his truck and was ambushed by a small gang of thugs while he was driving along some near-deserted streets looking for an address. Luckily, one of the PCs was nearby and was able to help Lou drive them off. They've been friends (or even contacts) ever since. Eventually, the PC informed Lou of some of the strange and otherworldly things he'd seen and asked for help in defeating them. Lou agreed, and spent a few months helping out, and then Lou and the PC went their separate ways.

Lou has been hired at Norleans BioChem. Recently, he started hauling tanker trucks to the swamps outside of New Orleans and witnessed the



dumping of the pesticides into Lake Maurepas. Although troubled by it, he decided to keep quiet in order to keep his job.

But, in the last few weeks, he's been noticing very strange things going on. Throughout the city, more and more people are getting sick and acting strangely. It seems everyone has a headache and is nauseous. Everyone knows that it's something in the water, but few people can afford to drink purified water, and only the rich in the center of the city can afford imported water. Therefore, nearly everyone has to drink it, no matter what the consequences.

However, that's wonderful compared to what's happening in the poor sections of New Orleans. In Lou's own neighborhood, several people have disappeared during the night. He's heard tales about creatures coming up from the sewers at night and taking people down with them. Two of Lou's friends have disappeared, one while she was on her way to Lou's house.



AIRLINE TICKET PRICES TO NEW ORLEANS

City	Price
New Boswash	\$2534
Nornews	\$3750
Gold Coast	\$970
Cincinnati	\$2345
Chiwaukee	\$1770
St. Louis	\$694
Dallas/Ft. Worth	\$412
Denver	\$3325
Salt Lake City/Ogden	\$4126
Phoenix	\$3731
Frisco	\$2644
LA	\$2194
Seacouver	\$7984

That's when Lou decided he needed some good help quickly. His thoughts immediately went back to one of the PCs. Lou knew that if anyone could help him, it would be his friend who had told him about the other mysterious events—which included stories about people disappearing mysteriously.

Since Lou had no access to phone communications to anywhere outside New Orleans, he had to send a letter to the PCs. However, there's no mail

service either, so Lou had to have it specially delivered by a company that delivers packages.

Unfortunately, shortly after Lou handed the letter over to the delivery office, he too disappeared.

GETTING TO NEW ORLEANS Air Travel

No matter where the PCs live, they will have a

tough time getting to New Orleans unless one among them is a nomenklatura, or they have access to aircraft capable of taking them to New Orleans. Or, if money means little to the PCs, they can spend their own money on a ticket.

The central problem is that air travel is extraordinarily expensive. The middle class really has little opportunity to fly by air. This is because there are so few passenger flights anymore. Only megaplexes have flights going to and from them, and those flights are packed so more can fly on a given plane. Some of the flights are on jet-powered passenger planes (almost always the DC-10 or smaller) but most flights are turboprop planes that carry 30 passengers or so. The corporate executives and the nomenklatura travel in their own private jets.

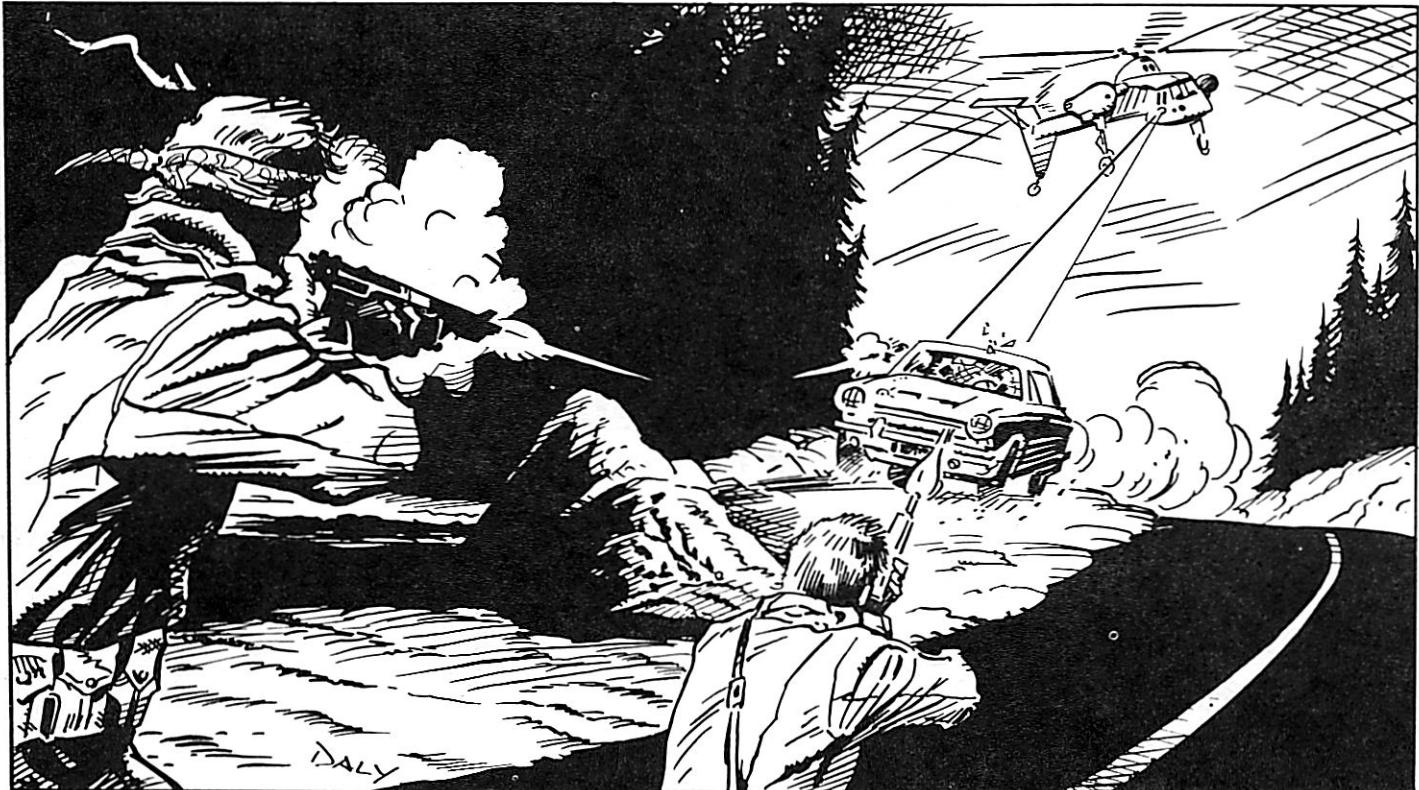
If the players decide to find out how much it would cost to get to New Orleans by air, consult the table on the left. It lists the cost of flying to New Orleans from various points of origin. The prices are for a round-trip ticket per person during a weekday. Prices will not vary by much, as the number of passenger flights leaving metroplexes is limited. Sometimes, however, fuel shortages can double or triple the price for a few days. Referees can use a sudden price increase to keep players from flying, if he or she wants to have the PCs take an overland route to experience travel encounters.

Don't forget that the PCs will probably want to rent a car when they get to New Orleans. The costs for renting vehicles are given in the sidebar at the left.

Land Travel

The referee is encouraged to look at a road map of Louisiana to help the PCs pick a route to New Orleans. It should be understood that almost all of the smaller roads will be closed and only four-lane interstate roads are both well-maintained and well-patrolled (relatively speaking). The characters can, of course, take major roads that aren't US interstates, but they run the high risk of ambush from local bandits.

Should the PCs take an unpatrolled road, there is a 40% chance every day that they will be ambushed.



If they are, a typical party might consist of seven Experienced NPCs armed with shotguns and driving heavy vehicles like large pickups or four-wheel drive vehicles.

Ambushers are typically after valuables, and have little or no respect for human life.

There is only one functioning four-lane highway leading into New Orleans: US 10. US 55 leads most of the way to New Orleans, but terminates where it intersects at US 12. Characters taking US 55 to New Orleans will have to go to Baton Rouge and then take S. 10 to New Orleans if they want to remain on the four-lane highways. Doing so is the safest method, since the US interstates are relatively well-maintained and well-patrolled in Louisiana.

However, should the characters decide to go off the interstate in favor of trying to make better time to New Orleans, they will find that all of the roads around Lake Maurepas have been closed or are simply overgrown. The section of US 55 that runs along Lake Maurepas has crumbled and is no longer passable.

From the West: Characters going to New Orleans from the West can take US 10 or US 20, then US 49 which leads to US 10.

From the North: US Federal 165 is the only well-maintained road coming into Louisiana from the North. 165 leads to Alexandria, whereupon the PCs can take US 49 to US 10.

From the East: The PCs can take either US 59 to US 10 or US 10 alone, depending exactly where they come from.

ARRIVAL AT NEW ORLEANS

If the PCs arrive by air, the first thing they will notice is the thick haze that surrounds the city. The skyscrapers in the city's center easily reach into the haze. As the PCs approach, they will only be able to see the tops of the three tallest buildings in New Orleans, which look like islands floating on a sooty grey sea.

By land, the characters will see the haze towering over the city like an umbrella. Corporate skyscrapers extend above the haze.



New Orleans is a terrible place to live if you're poor. It's a very humid, hot environment which doesn't see a whole lot of rain anymore. The city is

terribly overcrowded, and there's no relief to be found. The city center is a walled-in corporate citadel like other metroplexes, but even its inhabitants don't enjoy the same level of luxury that others in corporate centers do.

NEW ORLEANS DATA

Incorporated: 1805

Population: 4,785,691 (1998 state census)

Principal Industries: Shipping, plastics, and pesticide

Land Area: 1128 sq km

Churches: 152

Parks: 583

Radio Stations: 5 AM, 7 FM

Television Stations: 3 local, 143 satellite-access

Civilian Labor Force: 3,620,438

Unemployed: 1,448,175

Percent Unemployed: 40%

Average Income per Year: \$9000

POPULATION

As New Orleans expanded into a metroplex, more people from the surrounding villages and countryside began to move into the metropolitan area. Fewer people were willing to maintain their residences in small towns and commute to the city. Instead they chose to go where the jobs were and opted to become registered citizens of the city, and thus they were eligible for city services like ambulance, fire, police and sanitation. At first, the influx of people was seen as a welcome boost to the tax base, so it was encouraged by city officials.

The long-term result has been disastrous. The city encouraged too many people to move in, and



the resulting overcrowding has led to massive unemployment, crime, and a loss of general logistic control. Police and fire departments still function, but they are seriously overburdened—every year a new section of the city is excluded from the normal patrol routes. Ambulance and hospital services have been so drastically cut back that less than 20% of the metropolitan population has any such services available to it. Even fewer people can afford it.

The Poor Houses

In an attempt to handle the situation, city officials built several massive apartment complexes. The apartments are little more than cells without bars, measuring six by eight feet, and have no plumbing. All plumbing is handled in specific buildings built just to house toilets and showers. The apartment buildings are 30 stories high and accommodate about 3600 people (four per apartment). They have become known simply as "the poor houses."

This has not helped the situation very much. It has merely contained the poor to city-sponsored prison environments. Despite numerous, vocal protests, the city also walled in the poor sectors, claiming it would be easier to keep crime out of the apartment-plexes. What it has done, of course, is the complete opposite—increase the crime rate by 500%. The police department has subsequently declared the poor house areas (inside the walls) to be uncontrolled sectors, and the fire department no longer goes there after two fire engine companies were assaulted while they were fighting a fire. The city feeds the poor house inhabitants by rationing food to them via a massive distribution building, which is heavily guarded.

There are some factories that employ people in the poor houses. They chauffeur the workers to and from work in buses with armed guards.

The Middle Class

Somehow, a portion of the city still houses a respectable—though not very well off—middle class. There are suburbs with duplexes and old houses that have been converted into apartments and the like.

NORMAL TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION IN NEW ORLEANS BY MONTH

Months	Temperature (in °F)/ Inches of Precipitation
January	78/2.0
February	79/2.2
March	81/1.7
April	89/2.5
May	95/3.1
June	101/2.6
July	107/3.7
August	105/3.0
September	92/2.9
October	89/0.7
November	82/1.1
December	80/2.3

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION RANGES

Normals

January:	72	high
	63	low
July:	107	high
	94	low

Extremes

Highest: 119

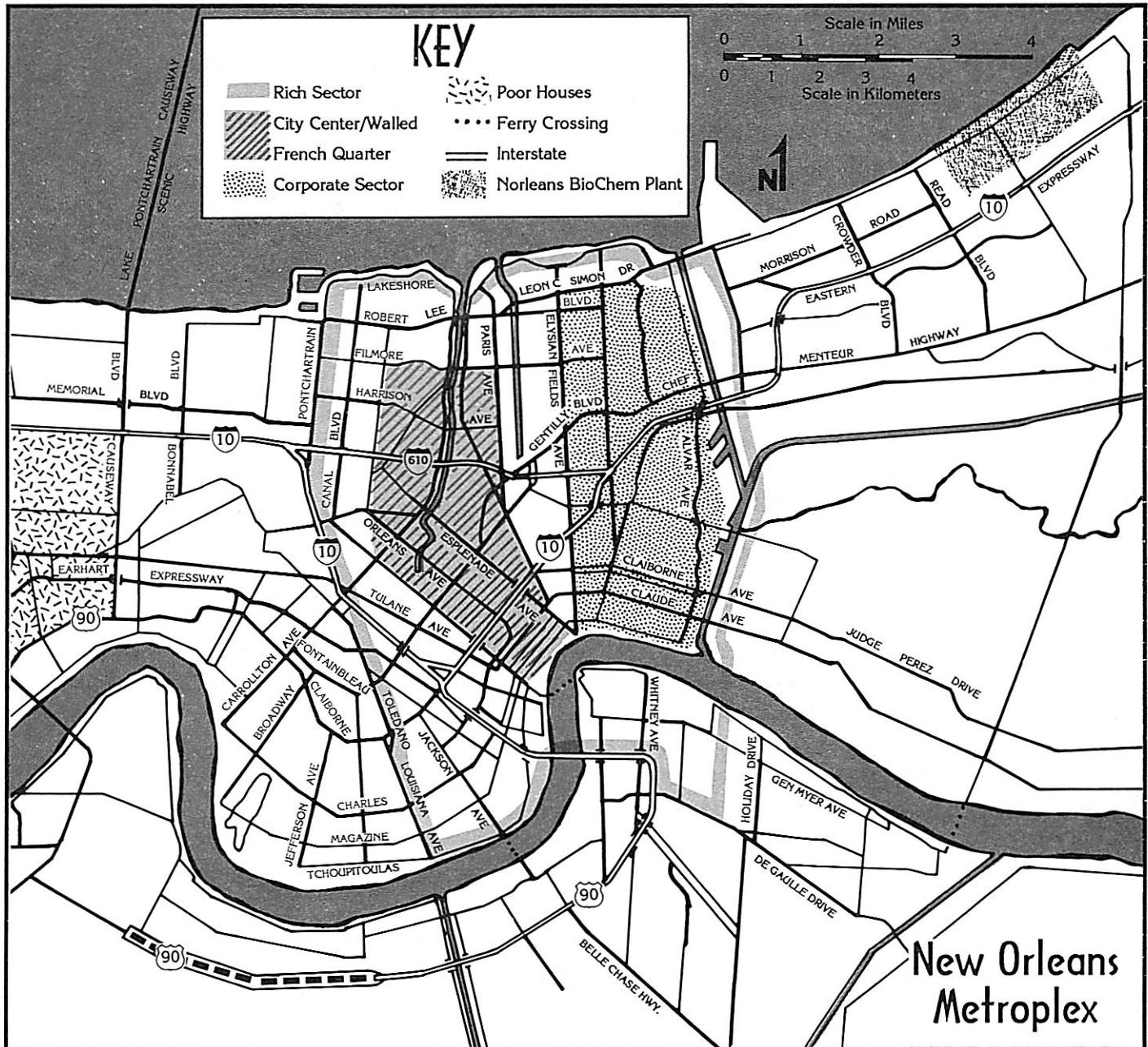
Lowest: 44

Total Precipitation 35.74 inches

Very few houses only have one family, and there aren't more than two dozen people in the city (outside the city center, that is) who live alone, but things aren't really that bad at all.

Few people own cars, and most rely on the public transportation system, which is quite good compared to other metroplexes. The buses carry about 75 people at a time and are well maintained. Police and fire coverage is weak, but present.

For these people, life is almost what one might consider normal.



The French Quarter

The historic French Quarter now houses the ultra-rich and all of the historic sites of New Orleans. This new French Quarter has Filmore Avenue as its northern border, Orleans Avenue and Canal Avenue as its western side, and Paris Avenue edging its eastern face. The Mississippi River is the area's southern natural border.

This section of New Orleans has been totally redone

into a nice, quiet area of reproduced stately mansions on fresh green yards acres in size. The area has visually stepped back in time in its near-authentic architectural state. Some people even use buggies and antique cars to drive on some of the area's brick streets. Costumed festivals are quite common.

It's here that Louisiana's nomenklatura and rich Dobies and Gidgets live; it is considered chic by them to speak French in addition to English.



Corporate Sector

Just to the east of the French Quarter are the skyscrapers that house the corporations of New Orleans. Virtually every block east of Elysian Fields Avenue to the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal contains a skyscraper. The tallest belongs to Tojicorp and is 75 stories high.

There are elevated streets that run between the French Quarter and the corporate sector that are heavily guarded and used only by corporate executives. There are also a few skyscrapers that have floors reserved for apartments.

However, not very many corporations have their corporate headquarters in New Orleans. Therefore, there isn't as much wealth here as one would find in headquarter cities like LA and New Boswash.

The In-Between

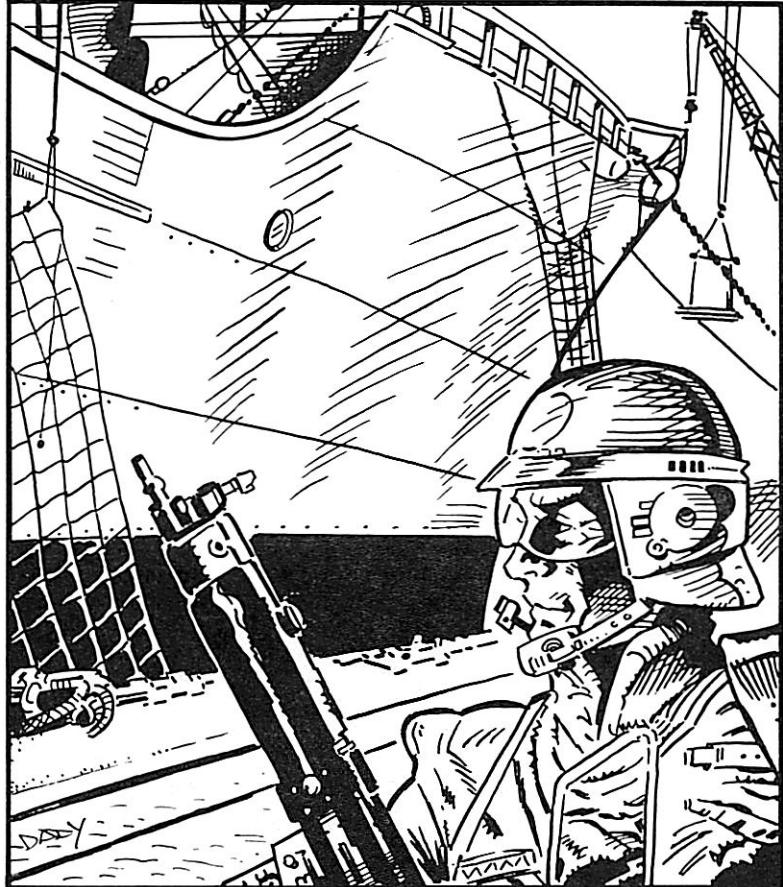
The rich who don't live in the French Quarter or in the apartments of the corporate sector live in large houses and ultra-modern, high-rise apartment buildings. Most of these buildings are north and south of the French Quarter. The rich who live literally in between the corporate sector and the French Quarter live in large houses and small apartment buildings. This area is also the entertainment sector for the rich and the most expensive restaurants and clubs are located here.

The people who live here represent the nouveau riche society.

SHIPPING

From its beginning, New Orleans has been an important port city, and it's no different now. The amount of ship traffic has increased with the decline of roads and other connective infrastructures between metroplexes along the Mississippi River.

The docks of New Orleans are used by every corporation in America and the US government. Naturally, the docking rates have increased a thousand-fold over the past decade, and the companies



that own the docks have profited from this.

Security by local officials is tight around the dock for most companies. The smaller the company, the greater the security. The large, local companies aren't restricted as to the cargo they receive or ship out (a special incentive clause to get companies into New Orleans). As a consequence, a great deal of illegal cargo enters and leaves via New Orleans.

The companies that own the ships, however, maintain the highest levels of security to prevent theft.

POLITICS

The metroplex is governed by a single mayor, Ricia Novlen, but she and her council concern themselves exclusively with the French Quarter, corporate sector, and surrounding upper-class areas. A special committee for the middle class and poor (referred to simply as "the committee") deals



SUNGLASSES

The need for eye protection is very serious in New Orleans. The large increase in ultraviolet radiation due to the progressive deterioration of the ozone layer is felt very keenly at the city's semitropical latitude. Everyone must wear sunglasses or suffer the following effects, as defined in hours per exposure to the sun per day.

Exposure Time	Effect
2 hours	Vision is strained and certain colors begin to fade perceptibly. Observation skill checks based on visual perception are made at one level of difficulty greater than normal.
4 hours	Distances are very difficult to make out and reading is impossible. Observation skill checks based on visual perception are made at two levels of difficulty greater than normal.
6 hours	Severe headaches due to eye strain; mild pain around the eyes. Observation skill checks based on visual perception successful only on a roll of 1.
8 hours	Acute pain and permanent (although mild) vision damage. Partial and temporary blindness. PCs can see their CON rating in meters ahead of them (effects similar to snow blindness). Observation skill checks based on visual perception effectively impossible.
10+ hours	Characters can see at most one meter away. Without major medical treatment, severe and permanent visual impairment is likely.

with everything outside the walled sectors.

The mayor and her council of seven appropriate all of New Orleans' revenues. Their budget concentrates heavily on the upper class, virtually ignoring the committee. It's often joked that the committee gets whatever the council can't spend that year, and it's not far from the truth.

Corruption is a matter of practice for the mayor and council. They practically have no regard for

state law, none at all for national law, and they seem to have no morals regarding the poor either. They offer no support for law enforcement officials outside New Orleans proper. In addition, the only reason they support local law enforcement is to ensure the poor stay out of the French Quarter.

CLIMATE

Hot. Worse than muggy, summer heat—oppressive. That's what the PCs will first notice about New Orleans. The sun shines three days out of five, and when it doesn't, it's totally overcast. It's hazy to some degree every day, without exception.

The conditions in New Orleans are very poor. The humidity level rarely goes below 85% and the average temperature in the *winter* is 77°F. There is little wind—never any wind or even so much as a breeze in the central metropolitan areas. So, the city sits in a squalor of heat.

Sunny Days

People don't leave their homes when the sun's out unless they have to. The ozone depletion is particularly bad around New Orleans and that has resulted in dangerous levels of exposure. On a sunny day, the sidewalks are inundated with several varieties of special UV-coated umbrellas and large hats. Sunglasses are a *must*. The serious need for sunglasses is reflected in the sidebar on the left. In addition, a common (though expensive) method of avoiding sunburn is to wear a jumpsuit that is specially coated with UV-blocking chemicals and is made of a material that breathes slightly, preventing it from trapping the wearer's body heat. These suits are good for short distances and aren't very comfortable, but they do offer a substitute for putting on greasy lotion.

The haze that permeates New Orleans does nothing to prevent the ultraviolet rays of the sun from affecting the population. All the haze does is turn the sky different colors. On most days, the sky is sooty gray. Others, it's a fresh blue-green. The color mostly depends on which factory is the most active that day. Referees are free to describe the sky



in whatever colors seem to reflect the mood of the game at that time (i.e., blue-green for happier moments, dark gray for foreboding danger, etc.).

Whenever the sun's out, windows are kept closed. Most people put some sort of reflective material over their windows (usually tinfoil) to keep the heat out. This has two effects: it warms the outside (since the heat is reflected off the windows) leading to near- 100°F heat in the winter and a smoldering 120°-125° in the summer in the city center; and it puts a larger burden on electricity demands as more people have to turn on lights. This naturally creates more brown-outs than on really hazy days.

Air conditioners are almost a necessity of life in New Orleans—nearly everyone has at least one. The most common is the Mexican Aire Fresco brand, which can cool up to two rooms if left on for about an hour. It's cheap at \$150 and only needs to be refilled with freon every seven weeks (which is made easy with disposable freon bottles purchased at hardware and appliance stores). It has a distinctive circular shape and is about the size of a car tire.

In the metropolitan areas surrounding the city center, the heat, from the foil-covered windows

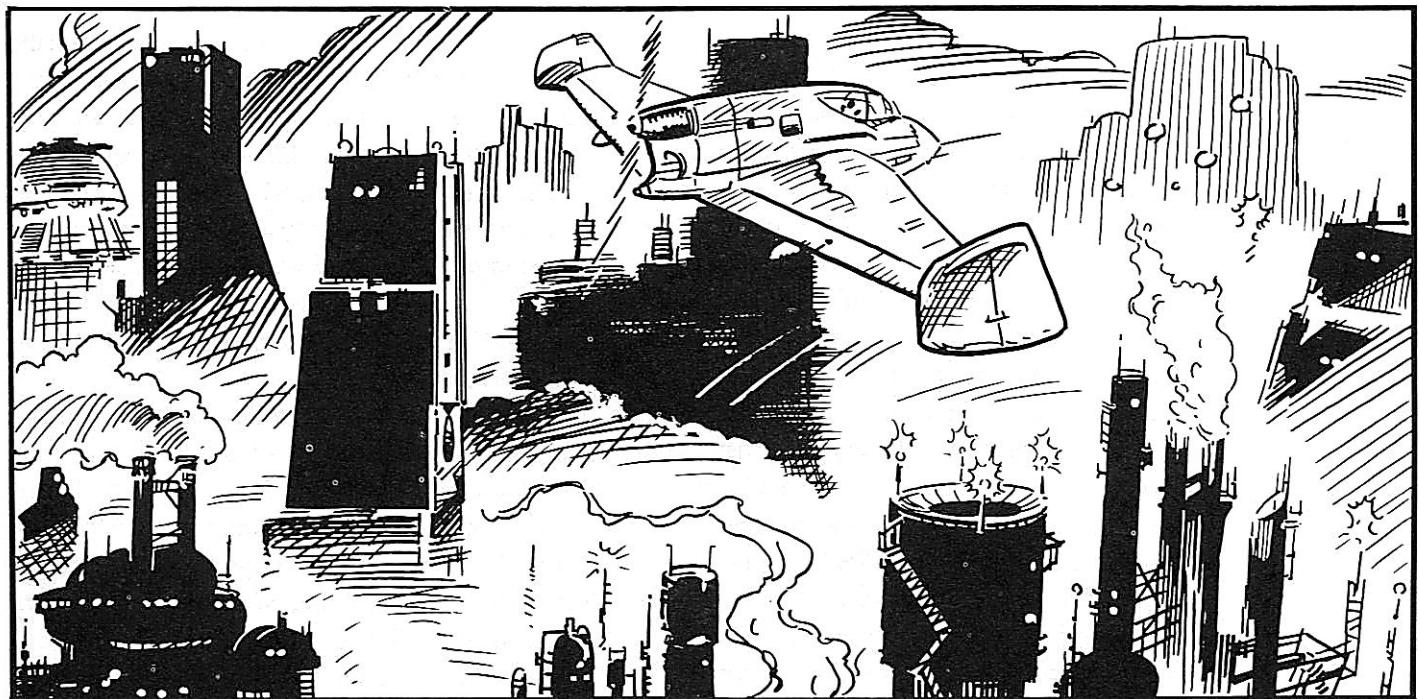
and what is released from thousands of air conditioners and cars, causes waves to rise from the street and distort the skyscrapers. Sometimes, the tops of the 'scrapers blur and shimmer greatly, lending a pronounced "mythical magic-land" quality to them.

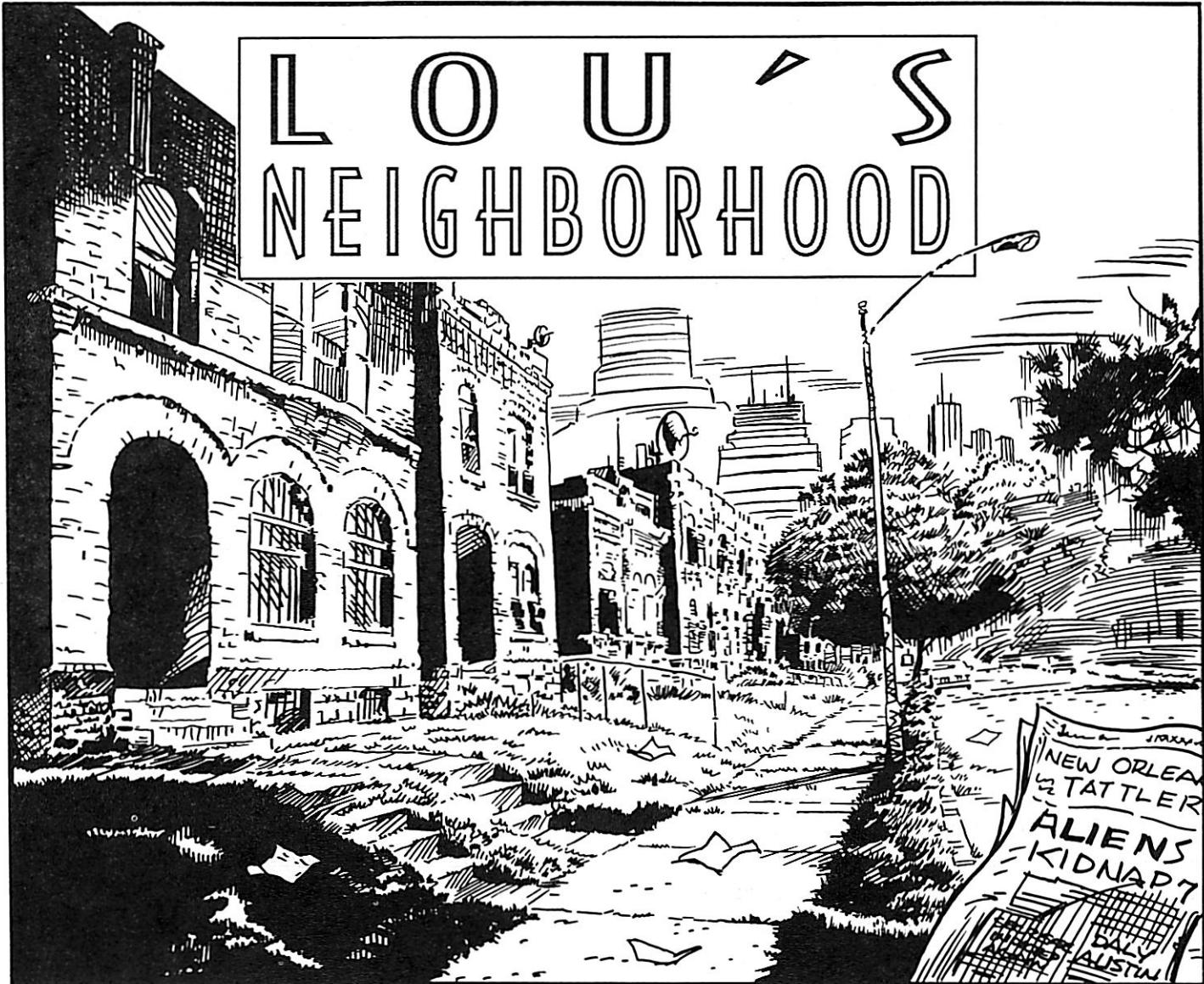
Hazy Days

The haze comes from the numerous factories in and around the city. Some of these factories are more active than others, but most days it seems that they are all competing to see which one can pour out the most pollution from its short, wide stacks. Environmental laws still exist, but they aren't enforced.

Most companies construct smokestacks that are five or so feet taller than their tallest building. This is so the smoke they release won't coat their own buildings. Since there's rarely any wind, they don't have to worry about the smoke blowing down on them.

In the metropolitan area, the sidewalks are jammed with people trying to run the errands they couldn't do when the sun was out. Windows are open, and people are generally less temperamental.





FINDING LOU'S HOUSE

The address is clear on the envelope, but it's hard to find, as some of the street signs are missing. The PCs should find it in about an hour of searching.

Lou is one of the few people who not only owns his own house, but is the only person who lives in it. With the severe overcrowding in New Orleans, this is a luxury. Lou also has a front yard that amounts to about nine square meters of long-dead grass. A rusted metal chain-link fence surrounds the yard.

The house itself is a small, two-story, dirty white affair with a total of five rooms (each with an Aire Fresco air conditioner) and one bathroom. The furnishings are simple and reflect the low income Lou earned. There are, however, two items that reflect his new position with Norleans BioChem: a color television set and a new refrigerator.

Of course, Lou won't answer the door. When the PCs try to pick the lock on the door (something they will have to do eventually), the task is Difficult: Lockpick (Lou has spent a lot of money getting the best in home security locks).

When the PCs enter, they'll notice that everything seems in order. Like most people, Lou left his air conditioners on all the time, so the house is cool and looks lived in. Nothing is out of order, and it looks as if Lou has just stepped out.

Among the furniture is a small desk which Lou apparently uses to manage his administrative affairs. If the PCs search this, they will only find some assorted employee-related documents from Norleans BioChem, such as payroll check receipts, insurance papers, etc. Included in this is a manual for the safe handling of pesticides.

The following is a key to the other rooms and



furniture and their significance:

1—Closet: One UV jumpsuit, several cheap UV umbrellas, and three chemical handling suits (self-contained, disposable suits worn to prevent exposure to hazardous chemicals).

2—Kitchen: The only information here is that Lou ate well and was able to buy fresh fruit from somewhere.

3—Living Room: Of note other than the new color television is the assortment of videotapes Lou collected. Some of the titles are: *The Andromeda Strain*, *Colossus: The Forben Project*, *Billy*, *Brainwave*, *Brainstorm*, and (of course) *Swamp Thing*, plus several horror films and a few documentaries about toxic waste and wildlife that are a few years old, and several tapes about swamps.

Piled next to Lou's chair in the living room is a stack of the most popular tabloids. They aren't in order, but he's collected the ones that have stories dealing with New Orleans or ones dealing with computers.

4—Spare Room: Inside a chest against the wall are two pairs of binoculars and one directional microphone.

5—Bedroom: Nothing of importance.

6—Bathroom: Nothing of importance.

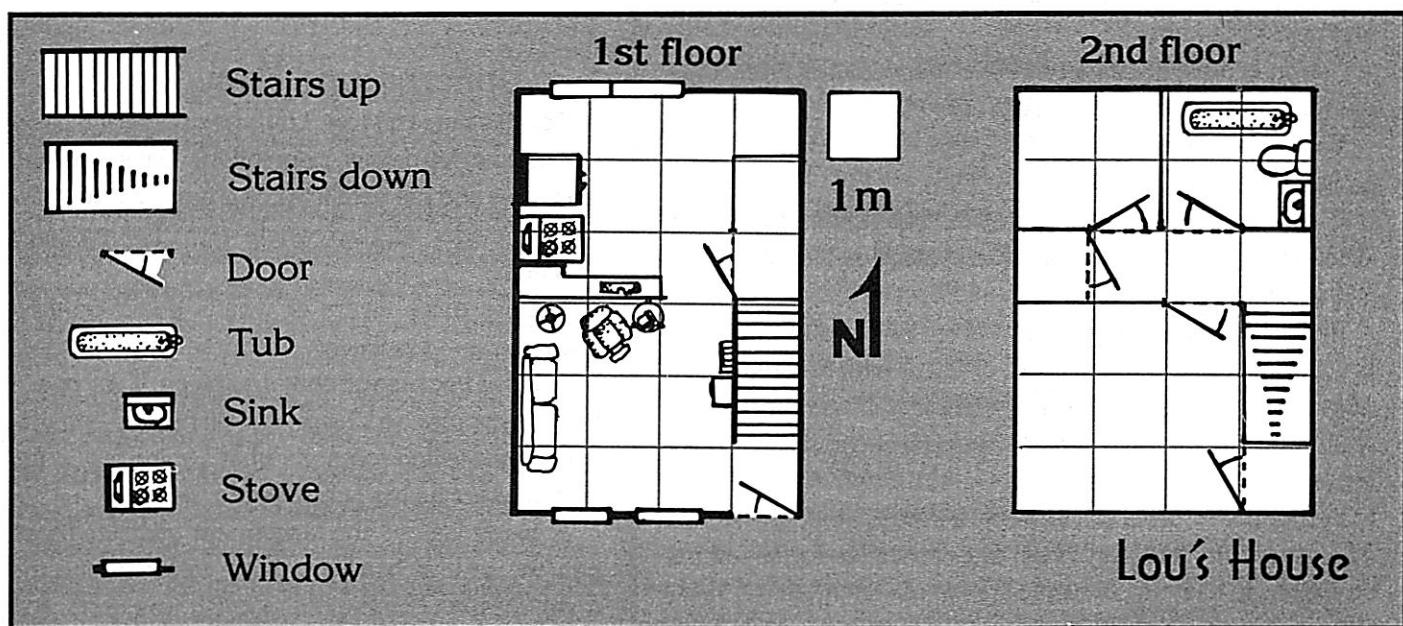
LOU'S NEIGHBORHOOD

The PCs may want to inquire among Lou's neighbors about Lou's whereabouts. It's now that some of the truly valuable information can be learned. The referee should make sure that at least some of the information presented is provided to them in one form or another. If nothing else, the referee can have the PCs see a copy of the *New Orleans Tattler* and the front-page blurb about people being kidnapped by aliens from their homes (see House 5 under the Neighborhood Map Explanation on page 21).

If the PCs don't visit any of the nearby houses, the referee should place one of the NPCs below at the same location as the PCs. For instance, if the PCs go to a diner nearby to eat or have a conference, Martin Sands could be sitting close enough to them to overhear what they're talking about, cut in and tell them what he knows.

Appearance

Lou's neighborhood is a little run-down, but it's still very respectable, considering the average income of the area. Most of the houses have been converted into rental apartments, so many have had doors and staircases added to their outside.





MARTIN SANDS

The trials of the past few years have worn on Martin. He has a grizzled, cynical look in his face that shows his disillusionment about the world. He was an employee of the state as a file clerk, but was fired a few years ago during a period of mass layoffs. When he was fired from his secure, civil service job, something in him snapped. His whole world was turned upside down, and his mind never really recovered.

Sands is now an eco-warrior who is more anarchistic than most eco-warriors. He concentrates on destroying anything even remotely corporate-related. He's blown up vehicles, tool sheds, garages, fences, lobbies, signs, billboards—anything he can.

Martin's fanaticism has not only led to a warped view of the world (where all corporations are the source of evil in the world) but to a sense of invulnerability. He is planning to destroy bigger and bigger targets every day—each of them single-handedly. Unless the PCs can help him (Sands has no one else to help him) he is doomed to die alone while fighting an impossible battle.

Martin is armed with an M16A2 (page 290 of *Dark Conspiracy*) and three magazines of ammo.

Experience: Veteran

Attributes: 6; CON 8

Skills: 5; Small Arms (Rifle) 5, Demolitions 5, Heavy Weapons 6, Lockpick 4, and Vehicle Use (Wheeled Vehicle) 6

Initiative: 3

Motivation: *King of Clubs:* Martin isn't really a sadistic brute, just someone who is out of touch with reality when it comes to acceptable levels of violence. *Queen of Spades:* Martin will not let anything or anyone stand in his way once he has put one of his plans into action. However, if he were to befriend someone, particularly a group of people like the PCs, he would probably heed their advice before he starts something.



Everyone has a fence of some kind (even a three-foot-high wooden one) and a few people even have outdoor surveillance cameras. There are few cars parked next to any of the houses; a bus stop is only a few blocks away from Lou's house.

Common Knowledge

All of the residents of the neighborhood know the following:

About a week and a half ago, three people from the blue apartment house (House 1 on the map) disappeared during the night. The night after that, five more people were taken from an apartment house several blocks away. Suddenly, everyone was afraid. Despite everyone watching out, four people were taken from another apartment house.

No one knows what's going on, and the police have said that they don't have the manpower to do anything about it. They merely tell the residents of the neighborhood that they should do the best they can to protect themselves, and, of course, not go out at night.

During the night, people tend to look out their windows with rifles and shotguns in hand just waiting to see something to shoot at. As a result, three homeless people have been killed and the police have threatened to confiscate all the weapons in the area.

Underground Knowledge

Besides the residents, Lou's neighborhood has a substantial homeless population. Generally, the homeless and the derelicts congregate at the community center and anywhere else that provides shelter.

They're more aware of what's going on than anyone else—especially when three of their number were killed because of what's going on. If any one of them is approached, he or she will be very enthusiastic about telling someone what's going on. So far, no one else has really listened to them.

A week before the apartment people disappeared, several homeless were taken during the night. Despite complaints, nothing was done, and



more homeless were carted off in the night. Word quickly spread about creatures coming up out of the sewers and dragging people back down with them. One story involved what looked like a giant sponge with tentacles dragging three or four people into the sewers; another story concerned a body being with all the blood drained out of it.

No one knows what's really going on, but the sightings of strange creatures are increasing.

Neighborhood Map Explanation

House 1: This is a two-story, blue house converted into apartments. It has a Chrysler LeBoeuf, with a "taxi" sign on top, parked in the driveway. The only person at home when the PCs visit this house is a slightly drunk taxi driver (Bob Lukas). He'll be very cross for being interrupted from his fine corporate TV viewing and won't allow them inside. If the PCs ask about Lou or anyone else in the area, he'll say he doesn't know them (which is true). If they press him, he'll slam the door and go back to watching *Gilligan's Island* reruns.

House 2: As the PCs stand on the street looking around or as they walk to their car, one of them will notice someone from across the street looking at them suspiciously while he picks up dead branches from his yard. As soon as the PCs look at him, though, he drops the branches and runs into the house.

The house is a nice two-story with a single, large tree in the front yard, which appears to be still alive, and is solely owned by Martin Sands.

If the PCs approach the house, Sands will shoot a few bursts near the PCs and shout at them to go away. If the PCs don't go immediately, he'll shoot at the PCs, trying to kill them. If the PCs try to shoot back, Martin is firing out of a window, so he's considered to be obscured for purposes of combat modifiers (see page 88 of *Dark Conspiracy*). Martin is also using the walls of his house for cover which have an armor value of 1 (2" wooden plank, see page 325 of *Dark Conspiracy*).

Martin will always fire bursts until his ammo runs out. Even though he's using an assault rifle, he's not very cool under fire and has a tendency to shoot



whatever moves. If the PCs realize this in time, it will be easy to get him to run out of ammo by throwing rocks to distract him, etc.

If the PCs manage to wound Martin and go into his house, he'll try to get out of the house and run away. If the PCs catch him and gain his trust (something rather difficult to do if the PCs shot him) he'll explain that he was afraid that he was about to be taken away like the other people who disappeared. He thought that "they" were making daylight raids now.

Martin is an eco-warrior and will try to recruit the players to his cause. He plans to single-handedly blow up the lobby of Norleans BioChem. If the PCs agree to help, Martin will be a valuable contact. If it's desired, the referee can go through with Martin's plot to blow up the lobby. Rules for doing so aren't presented here, however, as it is hoped that the PCs can talk Martin out of doing that, since it is rather foolhardy and not terribly direct in addressing any

Lou's Neighborhood

1



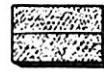
8 meters

Driveway

Fence & Gate



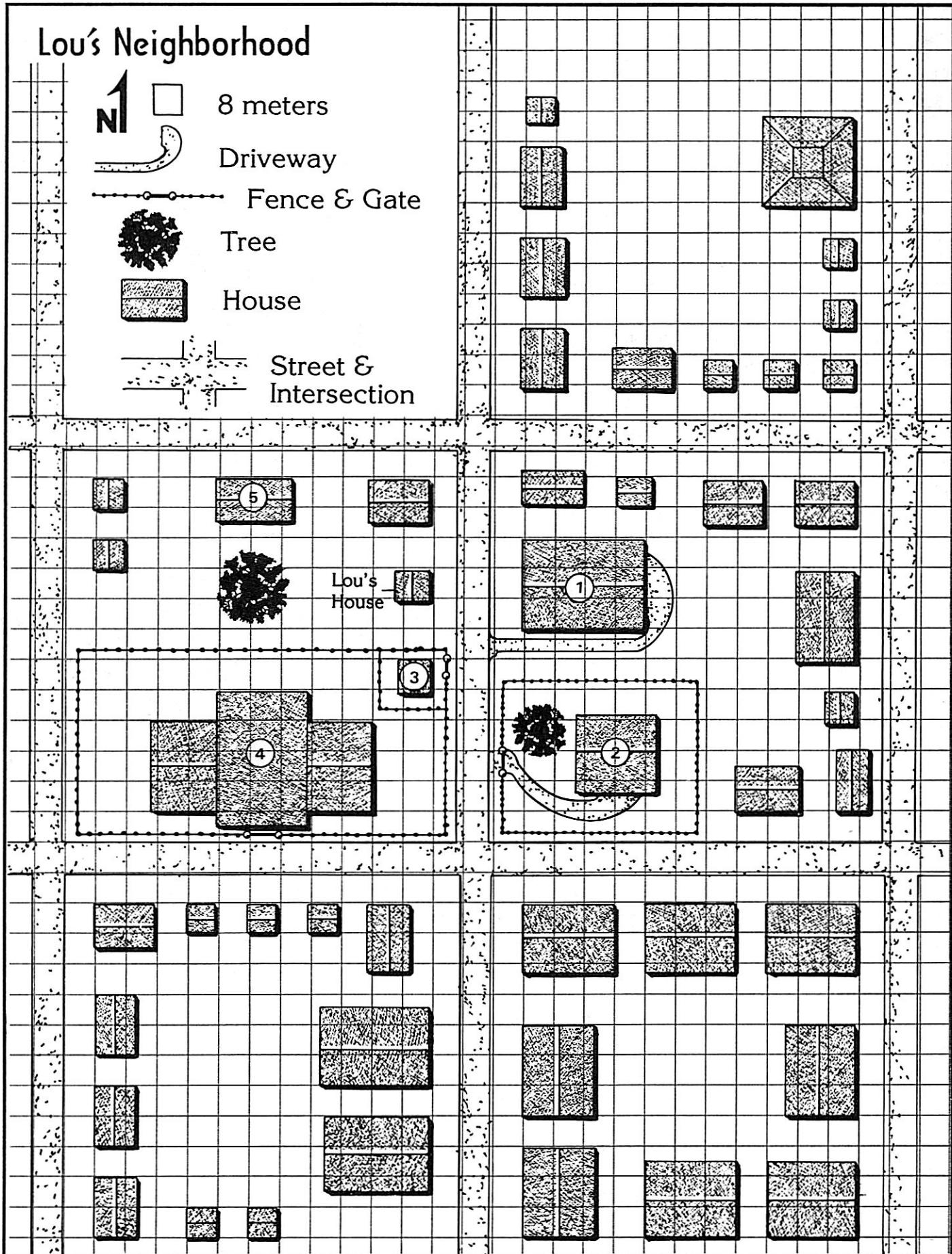
Tree



House



Street & Intersection





environmental problem, and into helping them unravel the mystery of Lou's disappearance and the chemicals he had been carrying.

Further conversations with Martin will yield the information presented under Common Knowledge on page 18.

House 3: This small, one-story house is the residence of an elderly lady, probably in her sixties, answers the door. From what can be seen from the doorway, she runs either some sort of day-care center or merely babysits for some area children.

She has no real knowledge about the disappearances, and will tell the PCs to come back later, when her husband is home.

She won't let the PCs in, and she keeps a High Standard .22 automatic pistol in a drawer of a hall stand next to the door.

House 4: This is a large, Victorian-style house which has been converted into apartments. A thick haze greets the PCs when the door is opened by George Hallaran. He and his buddies are gathered around some stereo speakers playing soft mood music. None of the people present seem coherent, least of all George. Any questions posed to him will be met with indecision and only vague recognition that he's even being spoken to.

House 5: Paul Williams answers the door to this one-story, ranch-style house. It seems he was eating at the time the PCs knocked. He's very cordial and will invite the PCs in if they seem trustworthy. When asked, he'll be very cooperative about telling them what he knows about the disappearances. He'll mention everything contained in Common Knowledge, see page 18, and add the following:

"I've seen one of the *things* that took Martha, she lived next door, down into the sewers. Hell, I watched the whole thing happen. I was sitting next to my window trying to read myself to sleep when I noticed something moving in the weeds next to my house. I looked down and saw some kind of weird, shambling creature dragging Martha away. I tried to open the window right there, but it's been painted shut 'cuz of the central air I just got.

"Anyway, I walked over to the phone and called the police, but I was put on hold. When I got me and the phone back to the window, I caught a glimpse of it pulling her down through the manhole.

"Never saw her again, and when the police finally answered 20 minutes later, they hung up after I told the story."

When asked for a description of the creature, he replies:

"Well, it was large and covered with weeds or long hairs or something. I didn't get a good look at it in the light. I couldn't see very much more than that. Seemed real quiet, though, but then again my window was shut and the air was on.

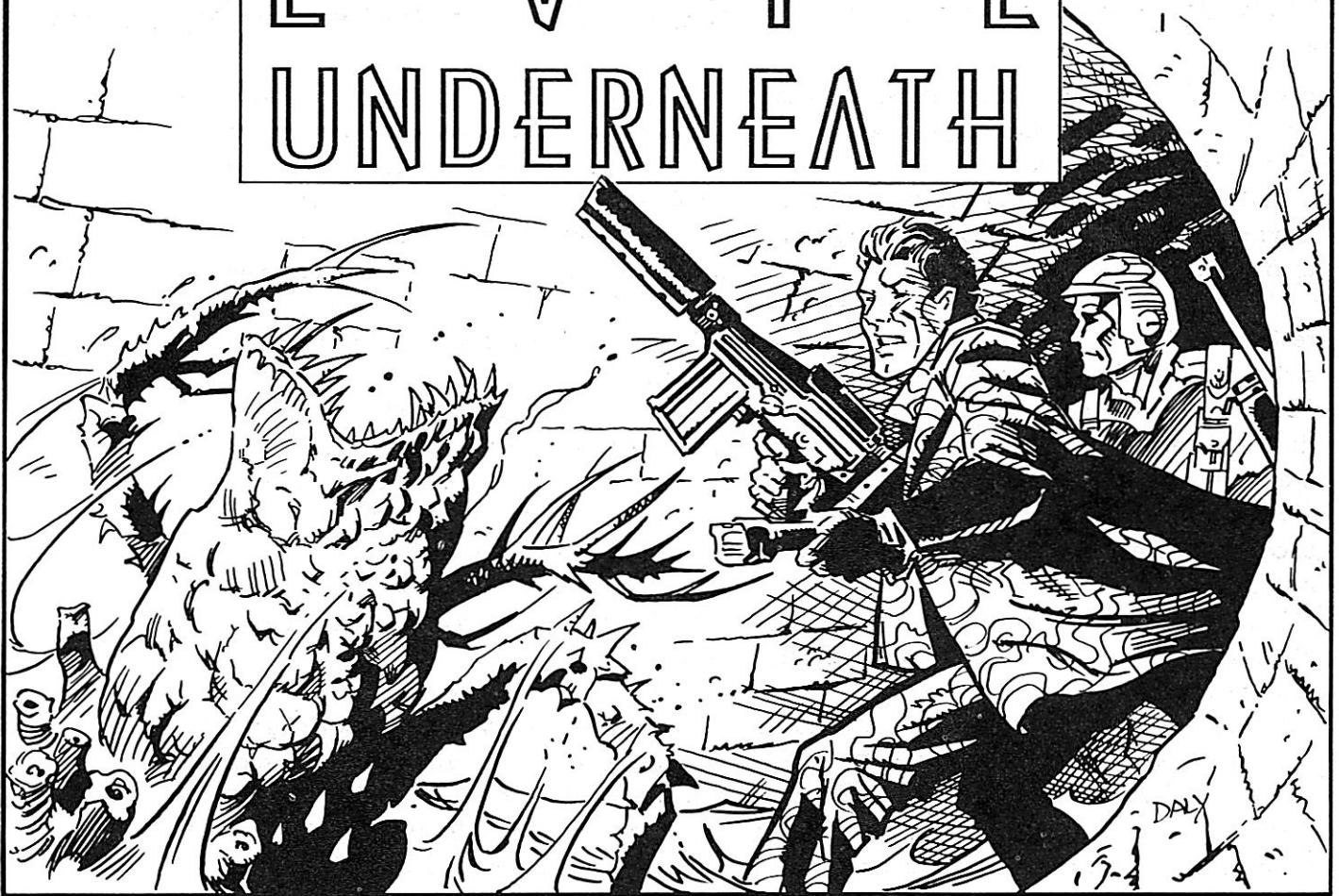
"I think it was dragging Martha away with whatever it's covered with, weeds or something, like I said."

Paul won't be willing to help the PCs any further and has really told all he knows. He will suggest they visit Sands' house, "since he's always crusading for one thing or another."

The last thing he'll talk about is being visited by Tom Whithers, a tabloid reporter who somehow heard about Paul's call to the police, and who came to follow up on it. Paul will say that he told the reporter everything he told the PCs.



EVIL UNDERNEATH



The only leads the PCs should have as to the whereabouts of Lou are the sewers and the delivery office that Lou posted the letter to. The delivery office is, unfortunately, a dead end, so the bulk of this chapter is devoted to the PCs' investigation of the sewers. The word *sewer* is used generically here to represent any urban underground passage in New Orleans. The PCs may in fact go through storm drains, access tunnels or any number of types of passages.

DELIVERY OFFICE

The PCs may want to investigate the delivery office that Lou used to send the letter. (The name of the delivery company can be deduced by their rubber-stamped markings on the letter.) The office, TransAmerican Delivery, is very small and is little more than a large closet with a counter. When the PCs enter the office, a teenager is behind the counter who identifies herself as Marcie.

Marcie did not take the order from Lou, nor would she know who did. TAD doesn't keep a record of which clerk took which order, so if the PCs want to question the clerk who last had contact with Lou, they will have to question each of the clerks separately to find out who took the order.

If they do pursue this, they will eventually find the right clerk. His name is Armand, and the only thing he will remember about Lou is that he was seemed very intent on the letter being sent as quickly as possible.

Armand will not remember anything else of note. The records in the delivery office are likewise devoid of useful clues.

THE SEWERS

The PCs have two indications that the sewers might be a lead to Lou's whereabouts: Lou's neighbors and the homeless of the area. The only specific location they've been given is the manhole outside



Paul Williams' house. This is considered to be the starting point for the sewer investigation. If the PCs go into a manhole or to the sewers at another location, the sewer map can still be used. The exact starting point above ground is not important—the fact that the PCs go down is.

General Description

As soon as the PCs pull the top off a manhole cover, they'll know what they're in for. Following a blast of heat is a terrible stench quite unlike any other. The closest comparison would be the smell of a greenhouse in the desert that's being used as an unrefrigerated morgue for leprosy victims.

Inside the tunnels, the first thing the PCs see is that the walls are covered in a strange vine-like growth (which is the source of the plant smell). Closer inspection reveals that the strands are thick (sometimes as large as three centimeters in diameter) and strong and have somehow managed to snare several rats. As the PCs look around, they see that quite a number of rats are tangled in the dark green growth, most of them apparently dead of starvation. The growth even runs 10 centimeters deep, reducing the overall tunnel diameter in places to about one meter. This means that the PCs will have to travel single file through the tunnels.

Each vine has several openings that resemble pores. These pores ooze an olive-brown, pus-like liquid that sticks to whatever it touches and is the single greatest source of the stench. The PCs will have to be totally covered in protective clothing to avoid coming in contact with the ooze. If some of the ooze touches their skin, it'll burn and react with their sweat to create a third brownish liquid that quickly (two minutes) gels. The gelled material can easily be removed, but a thin layer of it will remain until thoroughly scrubbed off. The smell will remain with the PCs for a couple of days afterward.

The bottom of the tunnels is laced with the growth as well, but the PCs will not be entangled by it. They will, however, have to move at a substantially reduced rate to avoid tripping and getting caught up. Generally, the PCs can only move two to three

meters a phase (an action) at a walk. Trotting and running are impossible. Crawling is at normal rates. The growth doesn't significantly obstruct the flow of runoff at the bottom of the tunnel. Small pools of water and sludge do collect in places, though. There doesn't appear to be any one source or central vine for the growth. It laces the walls of the tunnel in all directions, appears random in layout, covers the tunnel evenly, and there aren't any visible roots.

To remain underground for any useful amount of time, the PCs will need an air filter of some sort. The stench is unbearable in places, and they will find themselves unable to proceed unless the effect is abated. (Implement attribute reductions from nausea at an increasing rate if the PCs are bull-headed enough to insist they can "take it." STR, CON, AGL and INT are all appropriate to reduce.) Ideal protection would be gas masks, but something as simple as a dust mask (sold in hardware stores) that is scented with perfume or something similar will do in a pinch.

Some sort of waterproof clothing (such as a poncho or jacket) isn't a bad idea, given the constant dripping from the tendrils along the top of the tunnel.

INTO THE DARK TUNNELS

Description

As the PCs travel through the sewers, they'll see their environment undergo subtle changes. First, the vine coverage will thin out, and the vines themselves will begin to get thinner and thinner as well. The vine's ooze won't be as prevalent and, eventually, will disappear altogether.

The next obvious change is that the heat will drop dramatically. By the time the PCs reach encounter point 11, the air will be cold—the PCs will get goosebumps and be prone to shivering.

By encounter point 13, the regular manufactured tunnels will cease and the PCs will technically be in another type of tunnel altogether—dark tunnels. The temperature is so cold now that the PCs can see their breath.



Dark Tunnels

Red brick gradually gives way to a slick, black, porous surface that seems to radiate cold. The stench of the previous tunnels is gone, but is replaced by a very peculiar smell that resembles ozone.

Strangest of all, whatever the PCs are using to light their way will be absorbed into the walls, rather than reflected. A flashlight beam, for instance, will show up on a wall as a circle of light, then gradually become smaller until it shrinks away to nothing, and the ambient brightness will not be increased in the tunnels by what would seem the appropriate amount for having the flashlight on. Lanterns will have their radius dimmed and reduced as well, with even the most powerful ones reaching only a few feet.

As the PCs walk, they'll find the tunnel floors becoming more and more soft. About 100 meters into a dark tunnel, they'll feel like they're walking on a waterbed.

Sound, however, isn't affected. Dark tunnels have the same acoustics as normal tunnels.

The important imagery to convey is that the tunnels are alive. Whether the particular tunnel the PCs are in is or not, the PCs should have the feeling that they're inside a living organism. If that doesn't make them exceptionally nervous, nothing will.

Another important visual image is that everything is smooth. Edges and angles are very rare in a dark tunnel. The PCs shouldn't be able to find their way based on landmarks, either. A dark tunnel shifts and throbs. This constant motion makes it impossible to gauge distance and direction the same way as the PCs did when they were in the human-made tunnels.

They won't be able to scratch or paint navigation marks into the walls, either. The surface is porous and slightly gelatinous and will seal any cut within minutes and paints and inks slide off and collect in tiny puddles on the floor.

Finally, the tunnels are guarded by sewer apes and clinging suckers. Their statistics are

detailed on page 76. Their locations are noted on the map of the sewer on page 25.

Combat Inside a Dark Tunnel

Should someone have a notion to shoot the tunnel wall, the shock of the bullet will send visible ripples for several meters from the point of impact. These ripples will set the walls, floors and ceilings undulating. Although the PCs won't have any trouble keeping their balance, they'll realize that they probably shouldn't get into a firefight—especially with automatic fire or shotguns. (Referees may wish to impose a temporary penalty to Observation tasks due to the effect of the noise on hearing sensitivity.)

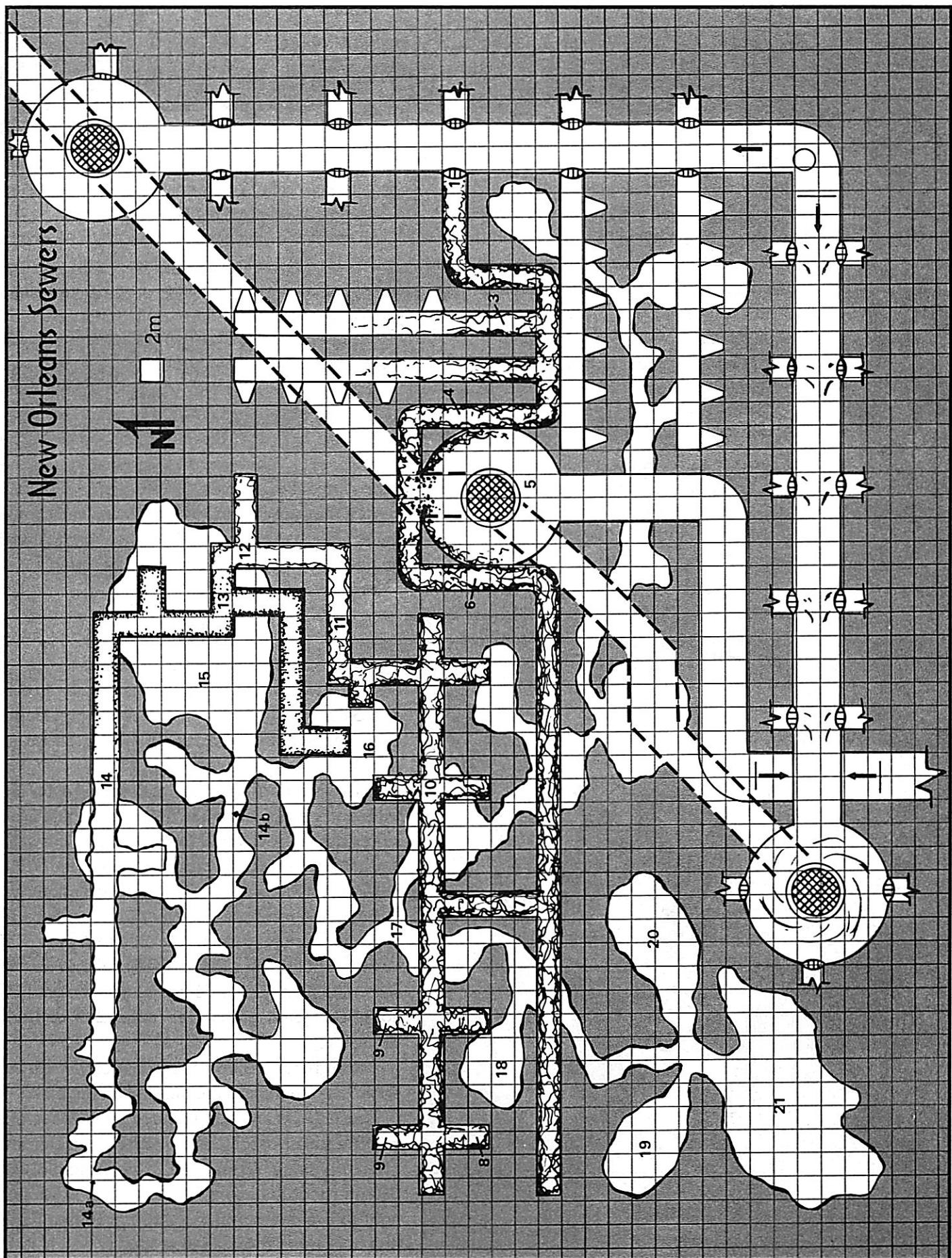
If, during an encounter, the PCs open up with their weapons, they'll probably regret doing so. Not only will they be temporarily deafened by the thundering, echoing gunfire, but the bullets that miss and slam into the tunnel walls will send the PCs to the floor (Difficult: Agility or Average: Acrobatics not to fall down). The effect for this is the same as for being knocked down (see page 103 of *Dark Conspiracy*).

Note that these combat effects do not apply in chambers that contain grubs. Also, if the PCs shoot at grubs and hit them while they are in a dark tunnel, then there are no averse effects of the gunfire other than the deafening noise. Only bullets that strike walls will affect the characters.

Dark Tunnels and Effects on Empathy

Going through a dark tunnel is bad enough for normal humans—for empathics, it's a nightmare.

Anyone who has the Foreboding skill will have the constant feeling of supernatural evil pressing upon it. The higher the skill, the greater the feeling of danger. The most common image the character will receive is (naturally) of the tunnel closing in and crushing the party. Other images might include the tunnel floor sucking everyone under or the party becoming lost forever. An empathic character should eventually have the feeling that the whole party is going to die within the tunnel, and that nothing can save them.





Player characters with the Human Empathy skill will find themselves besieged with horrific images. After even five minutes inside a dark tunnel, a PC with Human Empathy will be convinced that the walls house the personalities of thousands of people. It would seem like every missing person on Earth has been imprisoned within the walls and is screaming to be released.

Underlying it all, though, is a terrible evil presence. Something very dark is lurking within the tunnel. It watches the party's every move—and it's waiting to strike. The farther an empathic character goes, the more intense the despair.

Then the player characters discover the limb sections of the tunnel, and the real horror truly begins...

The Limb Section

The PCs turn a corner at point 14a, and they



witness the beginning of the true horror of the tunnels. Protruding from the walls, floors and ceiling are hundreds of arms, legs and torsos.

All manner of limbs are represented. All colors and sizes and age from saggy, old legs to the ripe, taut-skinned arms of infants. The Dark Minions have spared no one.

Most importantly, over half of the limbs are still alive. They twitch and writhe and grasp in the open air. Legs flail about as they try to run away, hands claw to get out, chests heave with despair.

It's also here that the floors and walls will be mostly fluid. Even as the party crawls through, the floor's firmness will give way completely, and it will be as if they are walking inside a black sack that's underwater. It will be impossible for anyone to avoid being grabbed by a hand or kicked by a leg.

It gets worse for the PCs.

Buffet

After section upon section of limbs, the party finds the reason for the limbs. The limbs in this section are like the ones the PCs found previously, but have obviously been gnawed on to a great extent (at 14b).

The hundreds of arms and legs sticking out of the walls and ceilings have had their muscle and flesh stripped away. Rivulets of blood run down the walls and ceiling, and pools of blood have collected on the floor. Just a few of the limbs twitch occasionally.

Near this grotesque discovery (at 15), the party finds the creatures responsible. Since they are deaf and have poor vision, the party will have no trouble surprising them. The PCs find a nest of eight hideous, elongated grubs (see page 219 of Dark Conspiracy).

These grubs differ from the grubs described in the book. The differences are detailed on page 77.

These grubs are being tended by an insectoid ET. The statistics for this and other insectoids are given on page 78 as well. The insectoid will defend its grubs however it can, but it will not fight to the death and will attempt to flee if the tide of combat turns against it.



SEWER AND DARK TUNNEL ENCOUNTERS

Most of the encounters within tunnels and sewers are preset; that is, none of the encounters are random. If the referee wishes, the encounters can be changed with no ill effect. The important thing to remember is to give the PCs the proper clues and guides to make sure they continue through the tunnels. Those clues are given below. Their location can be changed to reflect unexpected actions by the player characters.

Clues are so called because they lead the PCs to realize that they are involved in something either incredibly evil or unearthly—or both. It should become obvious from the clues that the PCs are in a slaughterhouse for humans.

1—**Clue:** A tattered piece of clothing is caught along the bottom of the tunnel. It looks like a part of a pajama or similar type of clothing. If the PCs take this back to Paul Williams, he'll identify it as

part of the nightgown Martha usually wore.

2—**Encounter:** Clinging sucker.

3—**Encounter:** Clinging sucker. Noteworthy of this encounter is that several of the tentacles have been severed. There are still eight of them to attack the PCs, but the rest appear to have been chewed off.

4—**Clue:** A random PC (or all of them) should make a Difficult: Observation test to see a gold class ring (male style) wedged in the vines along the bottom of the tunnel. The inscription inside is: BTD.

5—**Drainage Room:** The wall between the tunnel and the room has been knocked down. There's rubble on each side of the break, so it's difficult to tell from which side the blows came.

The room itself has growth along the broken wall, and it appears the vines have snaked their way in from the tunnel.

Running water can be clearly heard and looking through the gate. When the PCs look down through the gate, the water they see flowing by beneath them has entered through the active drain at the lower left



of the map (the PCs cannot see this drain, however). A combination of weight and fusion from rust has made removal of the grate in this room impossible without special equipment. It can be cut through with a cutting torch.

Hanging from the grate are a dozen humans in varying conditions. They are dead, but not all have their skin and limbs. They're all hanging upside down from rusted chains and rope. A few of the taller humans' heads are under the rushing water, their bodies swaying and bobbing against the current.

It's obvious that they couldn't have been hung from the room the PCs are in, as the grate won't open. There has to be another way into the large drainage pipe the bodies are in.

All of the bodies are several days dead.

6—Clue: A random PC (or all of them) should make a Difficult: Observation test to see a dead rat that has a large lock of blond hair in its teeth. Given the length of the lock, it's probable that it came from a woman. The rat is on the bottom of the tunnel.

7—Encounter: Clinging sucker.

8—Clue: Piled in the center of the room are the

personal effects of perhaps hundreds of homeless. Included here are watches, clothes, and just about anything else that a person living on the street would carry on their person.

None of the articles are useful, and there aren't any weapons in the pile. There are, however, several items that give the identification of the owner. If these are collected and traced, the names will be listed as missing by the police. The earliest name on the list dates back three years. Addresses are from all over the state of Louisiana.

9—Clue: The PCs discover a two-meter high pile of corpses. Upon examination, they find that the bodies were all (apparently) homeless people. Their skin is covered with blotches and large (five centimeters in diameter) boils. There are 25 bodies total. All of them are still clothed for the most part. Most are missing their shirts and jackets.

If a doctor examines the bodies for cause of death, the cause is high levels of a chemical pesticide, the exact type of which is unknown.

The bodies were rejected by the grubs and the insectoid ETs because of the levels of pesticide within them. These people managed to accumulate large levels of the pesticide that Norleans BioChem is dumping into Lake Maurepas in their systems. This makes them unpleasant-tasting to the grubs.

10—Encounter: Air begins to cool.

11—Encounter: Temperature cold, about 45°F.

12—Encounter: Sewer apes.

13—Dark Tunnels: Dark tunnel section begins here. Temperature just above freezing.

14—Amorphous Dark Tunnels: Amorphous dark tunnels begin.

15—Grub Lair: Inside this chamber are three grubs, busily eating corpses. An insectoid ET looks over them all and spots the characters as they enter. The insectoid will order the grubs to attack the living humans and will itself fight the PCs. If two of the grubs are killed, the insectoid will retreat by burrowing through the nearest wall. It can't be pursued as the humans have no way of doing so (since the insectoid has the ability to essentially walk through the walls of the tunnel).



16—Grub Lair: There is only one, lone grub here. It has apparently just devoured a corpse. It's bloated and seems content enough to just remain where it is. It will ignore any live humans it sees.

17—Junction: Here the dark tunnels branch out to an eastern and western section. If desired, the referee can generate encounters for the chambers in the eastern half of the tunnels or tell the characters that the tunnel does not branch off at all, if a more speedy play session is desired.

If the referee doesn't create encounters for the chambers in the eastern half of the tunnels, then each chamber contains 1D6 grubs and 1D10 human corpses (in varying states of decay).

18—Device Room: In the middle of this chamber is a Darkling device which is about the size of a Yugo. It seems to be almost totally biological, containing no metals or plastics. It's also inactive; nothing the characters do to it will have an effect. Its weight and size prevent its removal.

19—Insectoid Room: Scattered across the room are three sleeping insectoids. They are oblivious to the party members even after they enter. The insectoids are in a deep sleep, and are totally vulnerable. If the PCs like, they can kill the insectoids in their sleep, but doing so will be difficult. Gunfire will wake them and killing one with a knife requires someone with a Strength of at least 5, due to the insectoid's natural armor.

20—Insectoid Room: This room is the same as 19. These insectoids will also awake if there is gunfire.

21—Cold Storage: Jackpot for the characters! Here are a dozen live humans being held prisoner. They are laid out nude on the floor and have a strange gelled material over their hands and feet which acts as a restraining device.

Near them are seven baby grubs. They are so young that their mouths and eyes have not yet fully developed. At this stage in their growth, they merely writhe and squirm about harmlessly. All of them are nuzzling themselves against the legs and chests of the victims.

The gel can be sawed through with a hand knife,

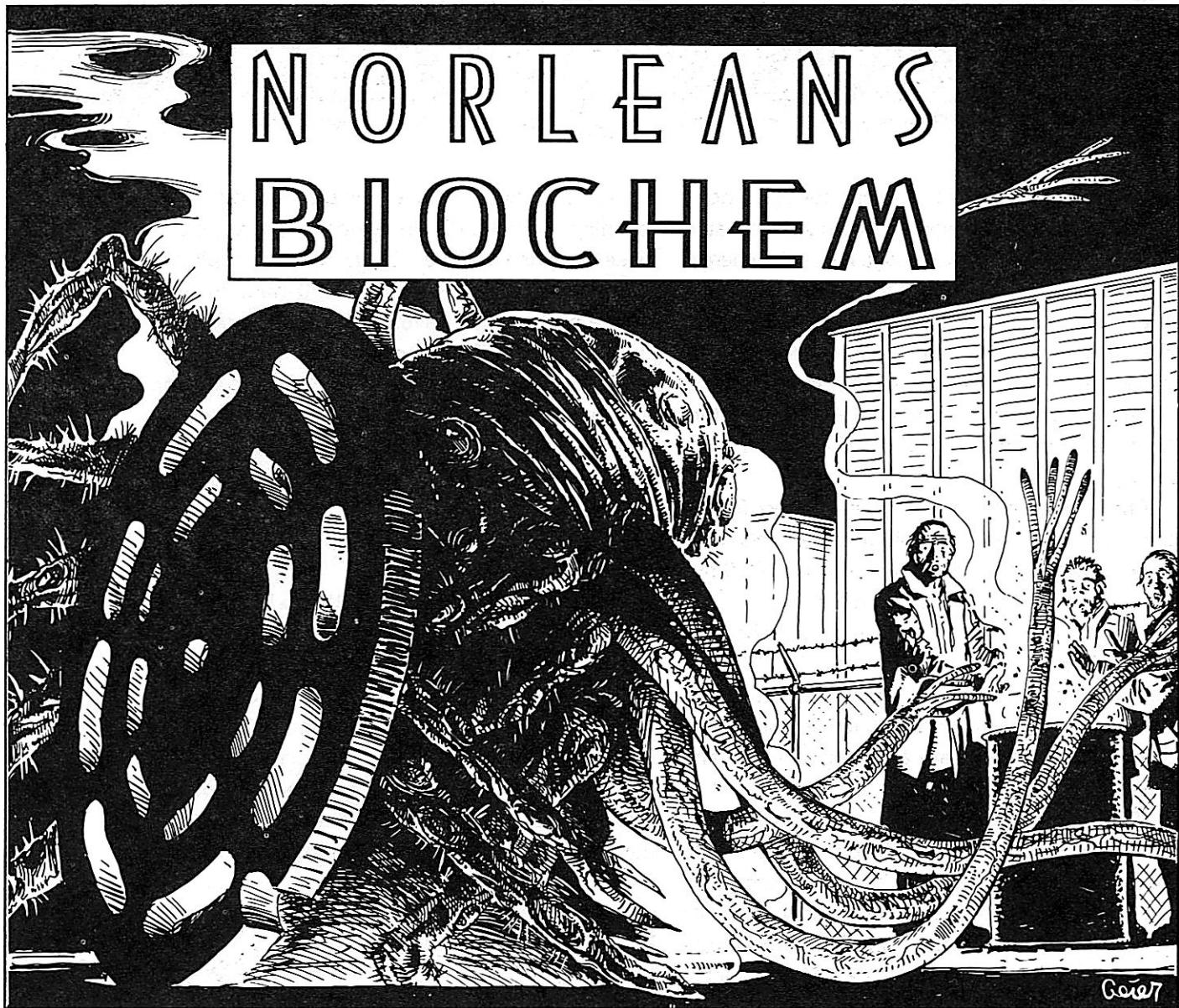
but will take two and a half minutes *per restraint*, meaning it will take 10 minutes for one person to cut loose one prisoner (five minutes for two people on one prisoner, etc.). After about 30 minutes, the referee may want to have an insectoid come in to check on things, if the pace has slowed too much.

All but three of the humans are close to death. They are all suffering from the effects of the cold and from starvation. Upon seeing human rescuers, they will gather enough strength to be able to walk out of the tunnels and sewers.

STYMIED

While rescuing the sewer victims will make the PCs feel justified in entering the sewers, it has not provided any more direct clues as to what happened to Lou, specifically. It has, however, alerted the PCs to the presence of a faction of insectoid Dark Minions (insectoid ETs) in New Orleans and to the problems of the bizarre and riotous plant growth. To learn more, the characters will have to seek information in the Norleans BioChem facilities or the swamp.





NORLEANS BIOCHEM PUBLIC INFO

The following information is common knowledge about Norleans BioChem and can be easily found in public records.

Sherman Biological Chemicals was founded in 1992 by William Sherman. The foundation of the company is almost an example of the stereotypical American dream. Sherman had a phobia and hated of insects and was also a talented chemist. He used his expertise to develop a number of highly advanced pesticides. These pesticides were efficient and effective, so Sherman started a company to manufacture and distribute them.

With the relaxation of environmental law enforcement following the Greater Depression, Sherman was able to market the more potent pesticides in his

collection. Profits skyrocketed. Sherman Biological Chemical went public shortly thereafter. Then he changed its name to Norleans BioChem to upscale and broaden its image. With the aid of Japanese and Colombian investors, Norleans BioChem quickly grew into the large corporation that it is today.

Norleans BioChem has its headquarters in New Orleans, and has offices in Chiwaukee, LA, New Boswash and several offices in Mexico and South America. Sherman died a few years ago as a result of toxicological shock from an experimental pesticide he was working on. Norleans BioChem is now controlled by a group of primary shareholders. The largest shareholder is named Martin Sturtevant. Norleans BioChem has diversified into all types of chemical production and distribution, but pesticides are its mainstay.



NORLEANS BIOCHEM ACTIVITIES IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA

Presented here is information that some street people, eco-warriors, and others know about the company.

The Eco-Warrior Version

The main chemical plant has been very active lately. Production usually goes down in the summer because of the heat, but instead production has increased. Eco-warriors will know that the plant has been making pesticide almost exclusively for the past month.

Shortly after the pesticide production began, strange things began to happen around the plant, especially at night. People began to see strange creatures come out of the sewers and linger around the plant's perimeter. The Norleans BioChem police made a sweep through the area, and a few didn't return. Right now, security is at an all-time high. Tension is also high around the plant, and the road in front of the plant has been closed to all but Norleans BioChem traffic.

Nighttime deliveries have been drastically cut, and the guard on those trucks that do leave has been tripled.

Obviously, Norleans BioChem has suffered some sort of military attack and some people have been killed. No one knows when the attack occurred exactly or any details. But, one thing's for sure: Norleans BioChem has its guard up—all the way.

The Homeless Version

The homeless gather extreme amounts of information about what happens on the streets. After all, the streets are their home.

If a homeless person is questioned, the following dialogue can be related:

"Oh, man, yeah, Norleans BioChem. What a screwed up company that is.

"Yeah, they're making these chemicals, right?

And, they're makin' 'em all night long; making tons of gallons, you know?

"Anyway, me and a few others were relaxing around the ol' empty drum campfire, you know, and we saw some pretty weird things happen. We were standing there talkin' about this and that, just across the street from Norleans BioChem when we heard a manhole cover fly off. Well, we look over just as this huge, and I mean *HUGE*, bug comes crawling out of the sewer. I mean, the thing was *man-sized*, get it?

"This bug looks at all the lights shining around the Norleans BioChem fences and keeps starin' and all of the sudden, one of those big robots they got walks into view. I seen 'em all the time, but I guess this bug hadn't 'cuz it kept standing there, like it thought it was invisible or something.

"Then it all breaks loose. The robot opens up with a bunch of its guns—shoots right through the fence—and the man-bug is pulverized right there on the spot. Pieces of it went everywhere, man. It was gross beyond belief.

"We freak out and start runnin'. Hell, wouldn't you? Every time one of them robots pops off, the Norleans BioChem goons come in their choppers and vans and sweep the place. I've been arrested twice by those suckers. Anyway, we tear down this alley, hopin' to get away from it all when we run right into a bunch of those bug-things.

"Well, I guess Martin was in front of us all because he screams like he never has and flails about. We see one of the bugs has stuck one of its arms clean through him! Tommy lost it right there and puked and ran back down the alley at the same time. I follow Tommy, and Rich, well, he never made it out. We never saw him again.

"We got away, but I don't know how. We just ran and ran. Tommy and I went back to that alley, just to see what we could find about Rich. The only thing we found was the top part of his dentures. They were all bloody. We tried to find a blood trail, you know? Maybe he crawled to a dumpster and hid or something. We couldn't find a thing. Just a big stain where a pool—his blood pool—had been.

"Awful, just awful."



NORLEANS BIOCHEM MAIN CHEMICAL PLANT

The player characters may want to investigate either the plant or the surrounding neighborhood. The information they could gather is detailed below.

The Plant

The security the homeless person described is accurate. RamTech Roboguards patrol the perimeter. Whenever one of the robots fires, human security troops flood out of their barracks and helicopters take off after whatever the robot shot at.

Generally, their duty is to determine what's been shot and if further pursuit is necessary. They are not willing to let anyone get away and they will always try to capture anyone who flees for interrogation.

The PCs will find it very difficult to get inside the plant. Security is just too high. In fact, the only way the PCs can get in is if they are allowed in by Norleans BioChem. The only way for this to happen is if one of the PCs is a nomenklatura who also happens to know someone of importance in New Orleans, someone who could let not only the gnome, but the rest of the PCs as well, inside the plant. Whether someone like that is known by a PC is up to the referee (perhaps someone would like to use an appropriate generic contact?).

Breaking in is not really an option. The plant is constantly on its highest level of alert, and security is taking every precaution to prevent someone from breaking in. The Roboguards patrol 24 hours a day. At night, the plant grounds and surrounding neighborhood for two blocks is so brightly lit, it's as if it were daytime. The heliport has a sophisticated radar system to prevent someone from flying onto the plant without warning. Inside the plant, every corridor has a guard booth, where IDs are constantly checked, and every employee is armed and told to shoot anyone who breaks in. Due to this policy, no one new is being hired, which prevents new employees from being mistaken for intruders. If anyone

comes to Norleans BioChem wanting to fill in for Lou's position, that person will be turned away.

Phoning the plant offices will yield a recording that says the offices are temporarily closed. The corporate offices are open, however.

To say that Norleans BioChem is paranoid about intruders is an understatement.

A Disgruntled Guard

It's now important for the PCs to meet up with one of the security guards that works at Norleans BioChem. If the PCs actively look for a security guard, they'll find one in a bar near Norleans BioChem. If they aren't looking for one, then the referee will have to arrange some sort of chance meeting.

When they do find him, the PCs will have to establish some kind of feeling of trustworthiness with the guard—he's not supposed to talk about the plant to anyone. The guard is currently disgruntled with Norleans BioChem over being passed up for a salary increase, so he would be most easily persuaded if offered some monetary incentive. He is not averse to talking and committing *minor* infractions against the company as a sort of personal "revenge." Buying him a couple drinks and talking about "the good old days" will work well if the PC has a moderately good Charisma and used to be a bodyguard, security guard, cop, or in the military. A female PC with a high Charisma and good Persuasion skills might also work. Because of his recent treatment, the guard would also be open to approaches by a tabloid reporter wanting to do an exposé on the company management.

After the player characters convince the guard to talk, he'll have the following to say about the heightened security:

"Tight security? Yeah, we're tight all right. Never been like this before in the five years I've been there. Not even during those riots three years ago, for the food, remember?"

"It seems that one of the execs had some bad experience—something about demons. I don't know what happened, but he apparently got pretty



spooked and ordered tightened security.

"Shortly after that, one of the VPs was found badly mutilated. No one knows what did it, but the next day we started on this super-tight security business. Hell, I'm not even supposed to be talking to you we're so tight."

He doesn't know anything about Lou or what he did. If the PCs mention that he was a newly hired truck driver, the guard will say that a bunch of new drivers were hired to take things out to the swamp, but he doesn't know what for. He will also relate the following rumor:

"I heard this from a friend who knows one of the men who rode shotgun on the swamp route. He and his driver were in one of the tanker trucks. The trucks were going through the swamp on this small road. Apparently, they had made some decision to go an alternate route, so they went through the back woods.

"They were driving along at a pretty slow clip, because of the bad road and foliage. All of the sudden, they were ambushed—but not by humans. I hear they were set upon by some kind of demon or something. The shotgun starts spraying out the window, just randomly into the brush. He notices the truck starting to go off the road, he looks over, and he sees the driver's head is gone! His hands are still on the wheel and everything. Something just went right up to the truck and took his head right off! It must have been real quiet about it too..."

"All hell breaks loose. The shotgun manages to kick the driver's body out the door and takes the wheel. He drives with one hand and keeps his gun pointed out the window. He and three others managed to bring their trucks in. I guess they lost something like seven people and a couple of trucks. No one's willing to talk about it. Everyone on that trip went into some kind of heavy debriefing I hear. I don't know any of 'em myself, so I don't know where they are now or anything."

"One thing's for sure, though. Everyone who goes on the swamp route is getting fantastic hazard pay now. If your friend is missing, then he's more

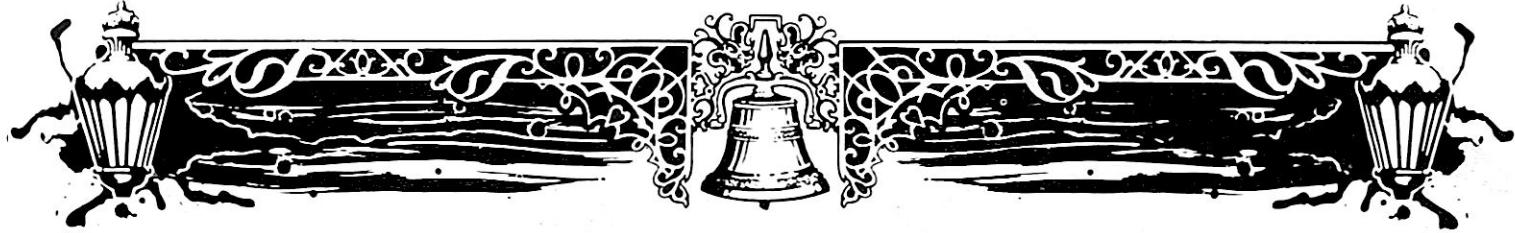


than likely slipping into the bog somewhere outside of New Orleans."

The guard doesn't know what Norleans BioChem is doing in the swamp or what's in the tanker trucks. He will be emphatic about not being able to get any of the PCs into the plant. Not only does he have the lack of authority to do so, but he believes it's impossible to sneak anyone in.

That's not the case with the corporate offices, however.

The guard will inform the PCs that although the plant is heavily secured, the corporate office building isn't. There is increased security, but nothing near what the plant is under. It is possible for him to sneak the PCs into the building, if they want (and are willing to provide a decent bribe). The guard has a pass to use some of the corporate facilities (like the movie theater, restaurant and such) that are open to corporate employees. That will get them into the building, but the rest is up to the PCs. The guard will tell them up front that he's not getting personally involved, and if they get caught, he'll claim they stole his pass. The guard doesn't have the authority to issue passes for himself or to get the player characters anywhere else inside the building, other than where the guard has a pass.



NORLEANS BIOCHEM CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

Eventually, the PCs may want to investigate the corporate headquarters, to see if they can get any clues as to where Lou is, to see if he was killed while driving in the swamp, etc. Norleans BioChem's records might just contain that information.

The PCs can enter the building freely if they are escorted by a Norleans BioChem employee or someone trusted by the company. If one of the characters is a nomenklatura, then there is a chance that person might know someone from New Orleans, and be able to get into the building by asking for a favor (asking for a tour or the like). If the PCs have no connections or contacts with Norleans BioChem or the rich society of New Orleans, then they can rely on the security guard they meet to let them in—for a price.

Unfortunately, his pass only allows him into the first floor. However, the day the PCs visit (assuming the go during the daytime, when guest visitations wouldn't be suspicious) the security is somewhat lax, allowing the PCs to use the elevators located behind the plant display (see Norleans Corporate Headquarters First Floor Map on page 35).

General Description

The building itself is very modern and has all the conveniences one would expect to find in a corporate headquarters. The central air conditioning system, in particular, is very good. It maintains an interior temperature of 70°F and is very quiet. The vents for it are well concealed.

Furniture is of one common style resembling the popular desert southwest style of the late 1980s and early 1990s. There's no shortage of small chairs and sofas to sit on.

First Floor: Reception and public services, and attached truck dock.

Second Through 10th Floor: Offices.

11th Through 27th Floor: Executive offices.

28th Through 30th Floor: Dark floors.

A Dark Secret

The Norleans BioChem corporate headquarters building holds a dark secret. Running along the northern wall is a huge, 30-story tall tunnel that is used by the owners of the building to ascend secretly to their lairs on the upper floors.

These upper floors (28–30 specifically) harbor the lairs of the insectoid ETs that have made New Orleans their home and the Norleans BioChem building their house. Each floor is laid out with dark tunnels identical to the cold, sewer tunnels described earlier in the Dark Tunnels section of "Evil Underneath," on page 22, with the exception that there are no limbs protruding from the walls.

A description and function of each floor is given on the following pages.

KEY TO THE BUILDING MAPS First Floor

1—Metal Detectors: These are never turned off. They are present to keep people with weapons from entering the building.

2—Guard Stations: Two guards (ranked as Experienced NPCs) are stationed next to the metal detectors. They are there to prevent anyone without a pass and/or with a weapon from entering. They are armed with Colt M1911A1 automatic pistols and MP-7s (pages 282 and 285 of *Dark Conspiracy*). The passes required to enter the building are the size of credit cards and have a magnetic strip on both sides. The guards pass the card through a reader, and the personnel computer tells them who has access to the building, and for how long.

If the security guard's pass is used, the guards will say that the pass is good for the whole day, but is restricted to the first floor only.

After everyone passes through the detectors and has been granted access, the guards issue visitor badges to the PCs and an employee badge to the security guard.

3—Receptionist's Station: Three people are stationed here to help with information about the



company and where things are located within the building. Contrary to other corporations, these folks are pleasant and cheerful, and willing to answer any questions they can.

4—Phone Secretaries: These operators direct calls into the building. Each office can dial outside the building without having to go through the switchboard, but incoming calls have to be routed here.

5—Movie Theater: This is a distinctive part of the building. It was constructed by the late owner of the company, who had a great love of the big screen. Since his death, the theater has been open to all company employees and their guests, who can enter for free.

It's set up like a real theater and decorated with the old-style filagrees and moldings of the theatrical-era movie houses. It shows current movies at a variety of times. The projection booth has the latest equipment.

The theater lacks a concession stand, however. People usually get something from the cafeteria instead.

6—Bigelow's Restaurant: A typical high-priced fancy restaurant found in some buildings. Shirt and tie are required. It's open from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. every day.

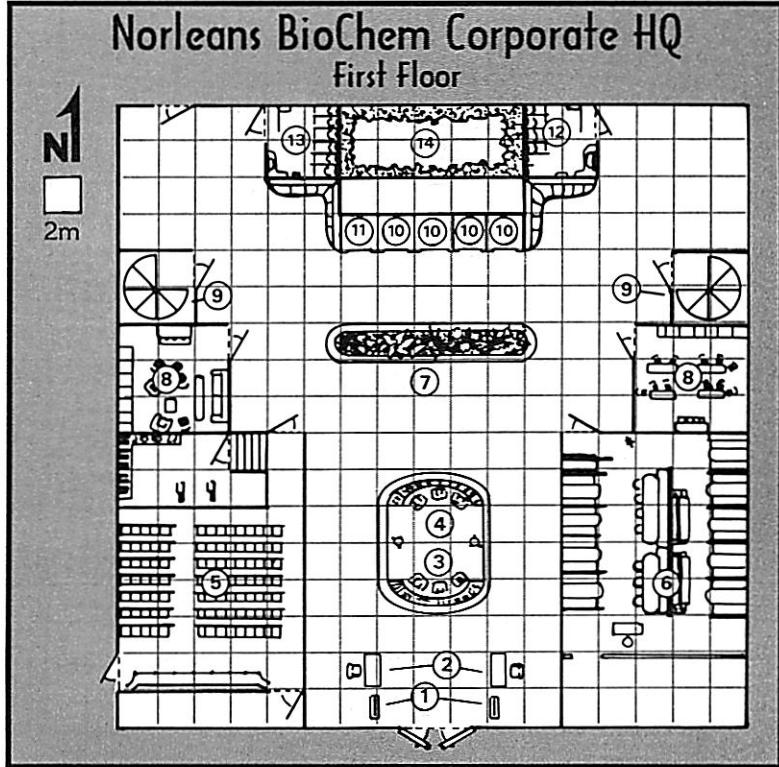
7—Plant Display: This is a diorama that shows what types of plants that benefit from Norleans BioChem farming chemicals. The plants themselves are artificial.

8—Security Office/Lounge: This is where off-duty security personnel relax. There's a large-screen TV and a vending machine in each lounge. Security personnel are obliged to carry their weapons on their person at all times, so there's no weapons locker (which one might expect in a place made for relaxing).

9—Emergency Stairway: These extend to the 27th floor.

10—Elevators: These go up to the 27th floor.

11—Executive Elevator: This is the only elevator that goes beyond the 27th floor. There is a key that has to be inserted for it to go to or stop on floors 28,



29, and 30. If one of the PCs has the Lockpick skill, it is an Average difficulty task to get past this security feature.

The elevator also goes to floor 31, which is the maintenance floor.

12—Men's Rest Room.

13—Ladies' Rest Room.

14—Gelatinous Spine: Described under Gelatinous Spine, see page 39.

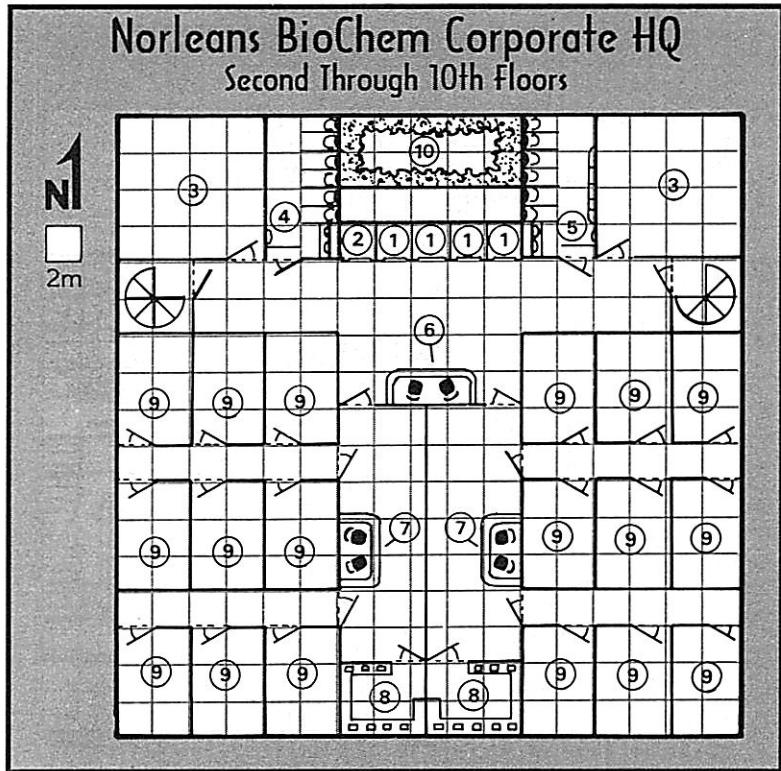
Second Through 10th Floors

1—Elevators.

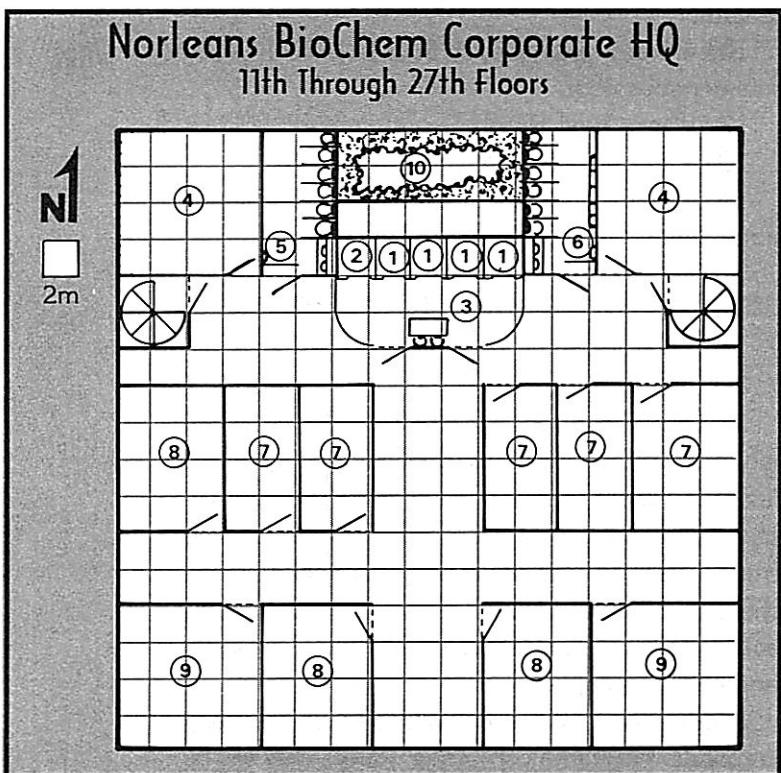
2—Executive Elevator.

3—Lab: These rooms can contain a variety of labs and offices, depending on what floor the room is on. The most common use of these rooms is for chemical laboratories. These labs are small and are mainly intended for small-scale, specific experiments. Virtually all of the chemical research goes on at the chemical plant laboratories, which are bigger and better equipped.

Another use for these rooms is to house the many corporate mainframe computers. Rarely, they will be



used as a corner offices for directors or other individuals who couldn't get a room on the executive floors.



4—Ladies' Rest Room.

5—Men's Rest Room.

6—Floor Desk: On every floor is a desk with a receptionist who announces visitors to the office personnel. Sitting next to that person at the same desk is a security guard, identical in training and weaponry as the guards on the first floor.

7—Secretaries: These are pool secretaries that are used by the office personnel. Since the jobs performed by the people on these floors usually don't require secretarial services, there are only two secretaries on each half of the floor.

8—Storage Room: These rooms contain office and janitorial supplies.

9—Office: These are simple offices that contain a desk, two chairs, a computer and a filing cabinet, and any personal furniture of the occupant. Each of the doors lock (a successful Easy: Lockpick task breaches them), and all of the desks have locking drawers (which can be picked by anyone with the Lockpick skill—no is roll necessary).

10—Gelatinous Spine: Described under Gelatinous Spine, page 39.

11th Through 27th Floors

1—Elevators.

2—Executive Elevator.

3—Reception Desk: The two people seated at this desk allow access through the two doors behind them that lead to the rest of the floor. These receptionists announce visitors to the executives.

4—Secretarial Pool: These rooms contain numerous secretaries that are used by the executives.

5—Ladies' Rest Room.

6—Men's Rest Room.

7—Junior Executive's Office: These offices are used by newly appointed executives. Although smaller than other executive offices, they are plush and have the trappings one would expect of junior vice presidents and special assistants.

8—Executive Office: These offices are bigger than junior executive offices and are also the most

common offices. They are always well furnished.

9—Executive Corner Office: These offices are occupied by top executives of Norleans BioChem. Even the chairman of the board uses an office this size. Each of these offices is lavishly furnished. The fact that there are only 20 such offices makes occupation of one of them a mark of extremely high status within the company.

10—Gelatinous Spine: Described under Gelatinous Spine, page 39.

NORLEANS BIOCHEM TRUCK DOCK

Adjoining the main building is a small truck dock that is used to house special trucks and security vehicles. By comparing the architectures and construction materials of the headquarters building and the truck dock, it becomes obvious that this section was added on as an afterthought.

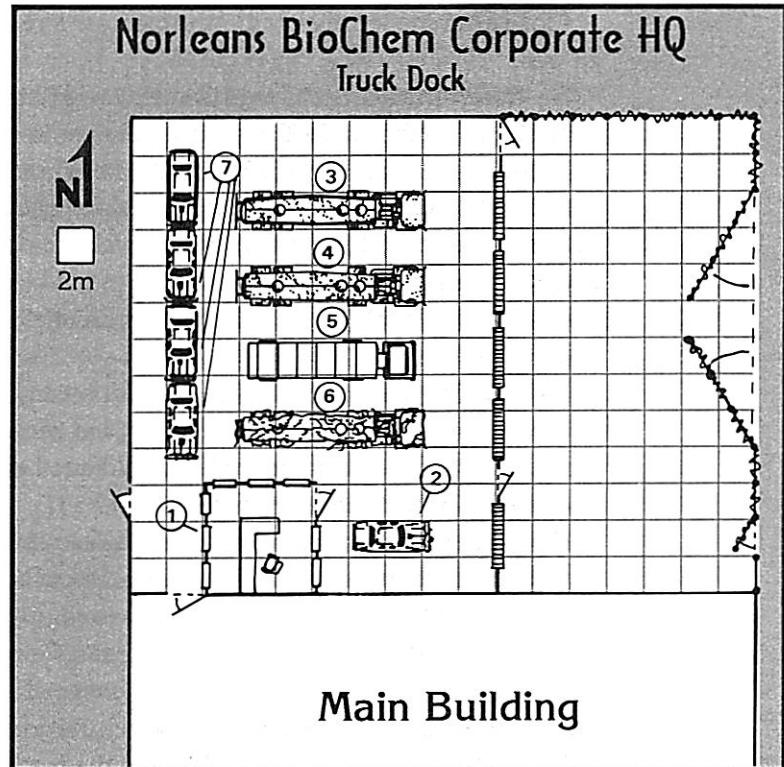
It's used as a heavily secured area in which to house trucks and vehicles that are valuable in some way. It's also used as a fail-safe storage area for highly valuable chemicals, in the event of an attack on the chemical plant results in catastrophic loss there.

Unfortunately, this often means that highly volatile chemicals are kept in it, as well. If one of the trucks is blown up, then the rest will shortly go as well and probably take much of the corporate office with them. This is an oversight on the part of the insectoid ETs.

The PCs may want to investigate the truck area, checking for Lou's effects and anything else that might tell them what happened to him. At the least, they ought to be able to find out where in the swamp the trucks go and what they're taking there by talking with Phillip Moll.

Key to Truck Dock

1—Security Guard's Office: Although a guard (rated as an Experienced NPC and armed with a Colt M1911A1 automatic pistol and an MP-7) is stationed here 24 hours a day, it's very difficult for him to keep an eye on the whole dock. In addition, the only thing to guard is the trucks, which have anti-



theft devices in them. When a convoy leaves for the swamp, armed guards arrive to accompany it, and those guards handle the increased need for security during the convoy's prep time.

Consequently, the guard usually sits in the office, relaxes, watches the video monitors which scan the dock and reads a book.

If the PCs investigate the dock, they will be noticed by the guard, but as long as he doesn't see any weapons or tampering with the trucks, he won't do anything about them. Getting into the trucks is not hard, since the guard cannot see between the trucks.

Picking the locks on each of the trucks is an Easy: Lockpick task.

More information about the security guard and the information he has is found in the Meeting Phillip Moll section, on page 38.

2—Security Car: This is a Chrysler LeBoeuf that is used by the security guard that patrols the park-like grounds outside the main building. It contains a shotgun in the front seat and radio equipment.



Close examination reveals that the car is armored as well.

3—Tanker Truck 3: Searching this truck reveals that it usually hauls a chemical with a long technical name—tetrachlorodiphenylsulfone—to Florida. It is heavily armored and looks like it's been through many gunfights. Right now, however, it's filled with aviation fuel, and it's bound for the New Orleans airport.

4—Tanker Truck 4: This truck is essentially identical to truck 3.

5—Dry Cargo Truck 5: This truck has no cargo at the moment. Manifests and other papers show that it's kept here as a spare truck, should another one break down at the last moment.

6—Tanker Truck 6: From the outside, it looks like this truck has come right from the swamp. One of its tires is slashed (it looks like it's been chewed up), and it's covered with various plants and dirt. Claw marks line the tank. There's also a giant dent in the front of the engine, as if a cannon ball struck the grill.

Inside, the papers show that this was the truck that Lou drove. The manifests show that he left the chemical plant full of pesticide, but it doesn't show that it was delivered. The destination is listed as: "Lake Maurepas pumping station."

7—Security Vehicles: These are security vehicles, all identical to number 2 on this key.

MEETING PHILLIP MOLL

Phillip is a dedicated guard, but he's willing to talk about what he knows—he's been spooked more than a little by what he's seen and heard. He hasn't been on any of the swamp runs, but he has heard about each one of them from the drivers and other security guards. He isn't ready to give up his cushy corporate job yet, but he's quite uncomfortable with some of the edicts, policies and ethics of Norleans BioChem. Phillip's statistics are the same as the generic Experienced NPCs.

Description: Phil is a Caucasian man in his late forties and is getting slightly out of shape. He stands about 5-foot-9 and has dark brown eyes. He looks strong, though, despite his age. If pressed, he looks like he could be effective in unarmed combat.

Although he's been issued an MP-7, he never uses it, preferring to rely on his pistol.

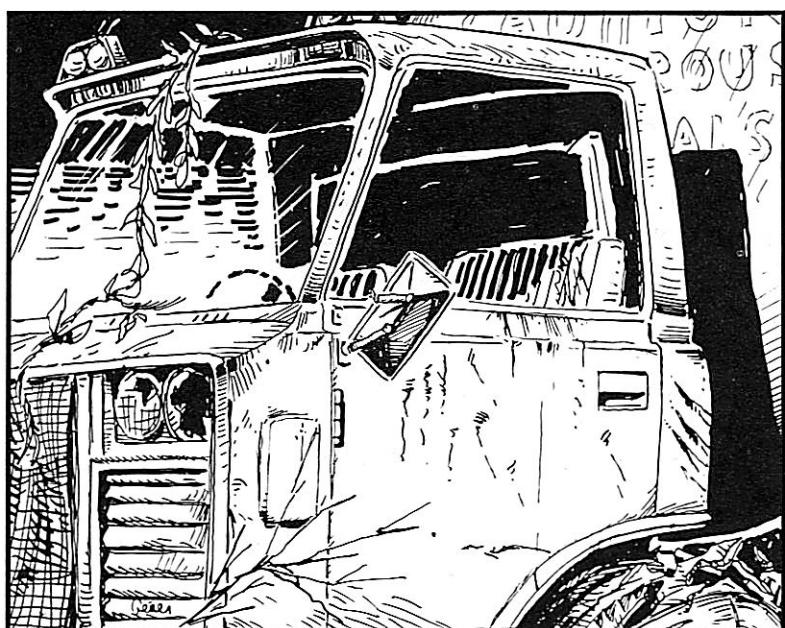
If asked about truck 6, he'll respond with the following dialogue:

"That truck? Yeah, there's a story behind that one, for sure. Seems the driver was moving along okay on this back road in the swamp when the convoy was ambushed. Luckily, this guy was in the lead, and the attack was on the center trucks. He floored it and tried to get away, but I guess something started chasing him."

"I say something, because I don't know exactly what it was, and neither does anyone else. The shotgun sticks himself out of the cab and screams and opens up with his MP-7. He sprays and sprays until his clip is out. He gets back in the cab so nervous that he can't reload—his hands are shaking too much."

"The driver, Lou was his name, I think, tried to find out what his shotgun saw, but he couldn't get anything out of him. So, Lou keeps it to the metal and keeps checking the mirrors."

"The shotgun finally reloads and sticks his gun out the window and just keeps the trigger down. He must have hit something, because they hear a loud screeching then a bump. Lou figures his shotgun shot something off the tank, and it had claws or





something that it tried to stay on with. As it slid down the side, it made those claw marks you see there. Lou said he thought he ran it over when it hit the ground.

"That's all I know for sure. I think the shotgun went into the hospital or somewhere for some psychiatric treatment. Lou was okay after it all, his and another guy's trucks were the only ones to make it back. But he volunteered to go back out again, and did."

If asked about Lou's disappearance, Phil will have this to say:

"Funny you should ask. One day, after he came back from a run into the swamp, he was real depressed about something. He was talking to someone else, I can't remember who, but all I overheard was something about company policy. I don't know what it was about. He was real happy to work here after the other company he worked for went out of business.

"The day after that, he came to me asking if I knew of a good way to make sure a letter got delivered out of town. I told him to go to my cousin's TransAmerican Delivery office. He asked for directions, and I guess he left straight for there.

"I never saw him again. His truck is still here, though, waiting for repairs. You're welcome to look through it to see if there's any personal effects or anything."

DARK FLOORS

It's when the PCs enter the dark floors that they realize who really owns Norleans BioChem: insectoid ETs. These insectoids are the similar to the ones encountered in the dark tunnels described earlier, and they use their building as a base of operations. The statistics for the insectoids in the Norleans BioChem building are given on page 43.

To date, no human has seen these floors and lived.

Entering the Dark Floors

There are two ways the characters can enter a dark floor: executive elevator or gelatinous spine. Both methods are described below.

Executive Elevator

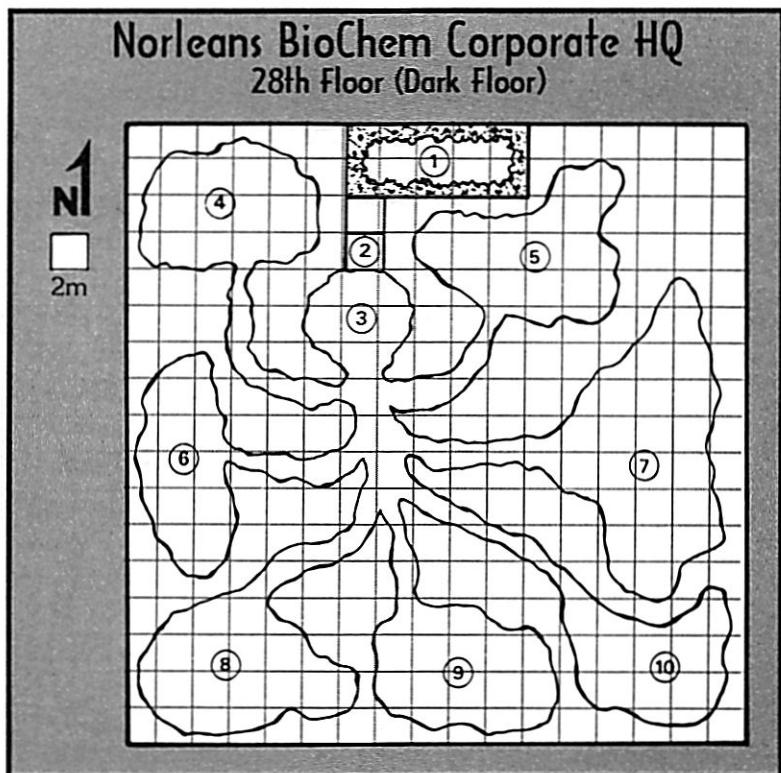
This elevator, described under the First Floor map key descriptions on page 35, is the method of access used by the insectoids when they need to bring something to the upper floors. Humans are used to load the elevator, but strict instructions prevent anyone from getting on the elevator with the cargo and riding with it to the dark floors.

A key is required to enable the elevator to go beyond the 27th floor, and only the security chief on duty has the key. This lock can easily be picked, however (Average: Lockpick).

The elevator also goes to floor 31, which is a maintenance floor. The maintenance floor houses air conditioning equipment, elevator access, cleaning supplies, cleaning carts, etc. and is not described elsewhere, although it is the same general size and shape as the rest of the building.

Gelatinous Spine

Originating below the building and running to the top is the insectoids' primary avenue of





access. It's composed of a hardened gel that allows perfect handholds for the insectoids. They can ascend at a rate equal to their running rate (40 meters per phase). Descending, they reach speeds of 50 meters per phase.

Humans can use the spine, but with some difficulty. Without equipment, they can ascend at a rate in meters per phase equal to their Climbing skill, which is a Difficult task. With climbing equipment, this rate doubles and is an Average task. Descending is Easy, and the rate is equal to a character's Agility in meters per phase.

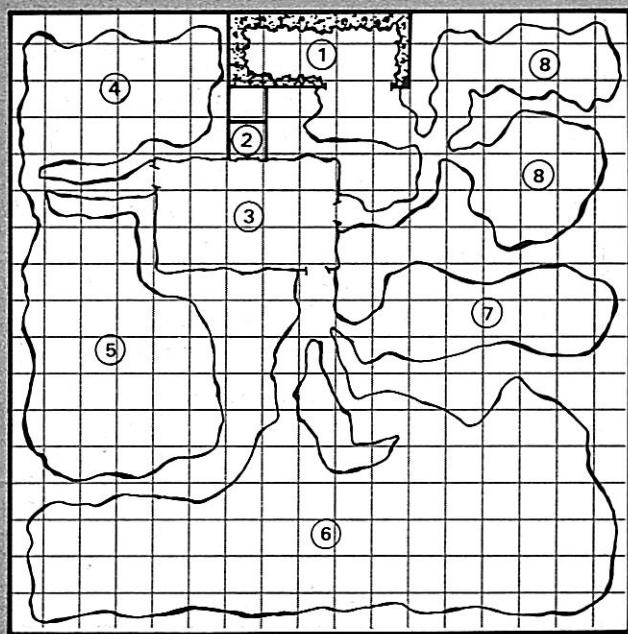
A character needs the Climbing skill to ascend or descend the spine. A character with the skill can assist one without the skill, as per the rules on page 58 of *Dark Conspiracy*.

If the PCs encounter an insectoid inside the spine, shooting at it is one level greater in difficulty because of the poor lighting and angle. The insectoids can also effectively go prone against the wall of the spine, which adds yet another level of difficulty to the task.

Norleans BioChem Corporate HQ 29th Floor (Dark Floor)

1

2m



KEY TO THE DARK FLOORS Floor 28

1—**Gelatinous Spine.**

2—**Executive Elevator.**

3—**Entrance Chamber:** This area is kept cold at 50°F. From here, nothing can be heard. This area is normally guarded by a human security agent, but the guard usually here has been reallocated to the Lake Maurepas pumping station. There is a desk, phone and chair, and the telephone is not connected.

4—**Storage Chamber:** This contains several corpses, all dressed and neatly stacked. They look like employees of Norleans BioChem because of their suits, but none of them have any identification on their bodies. The cause of their death is not apparent. Examination by a doctor or medic reveals that they probably died of suffocation.

5—**Storage Chamber:** Identical to chamber number 4.

6—**Human Equipment Room:** Stored in here are many items presumably stolen, including nearly everything electronic that a human uses in daily life. If the PCs dig into the pile, they will find a modified radio. The radio has been taken apart and strange electronics added to it. The purpose of the modification can't be determined, even by someone with a high Electronics skill. The additional wiring and computer chips have an unearthly design. But, if someone with an Electronics skill of 5 or more examines it, he or she can determine that it might be intended to be paired with a computer. The radio is nonfunctional.

If the radio is connected to a computer that has a brain slice as part of its circuitry, the radio will suddenly "come alive" with an unceasing garble of voices and sounds pouring from the speaker (whatever speaker the PCs have hooked up to either the radio or computer—the radio does not come with a speaker). The garble changes, depending on the frequency the radio is tuned to. The higher the number on the tuner, the more voice-like the sounds. With practice, the characters can begin to make out



words, sentences and, eventually, ideas. The lower the frequency, the less intelligible the sounds. The reason, effects, and characteristics of this radio/brain-slice translator device should be used by the referee as needed.

The radio is able to pick up the traces of awareness of brain-slice circuitry. It automatically transponds the activity of brain slices into audible sounds. If the computer contains enough brain slices, the sounds will be sharp, clear and easily understandable. The more aware the empathic computer is, the better the quality of the reception.

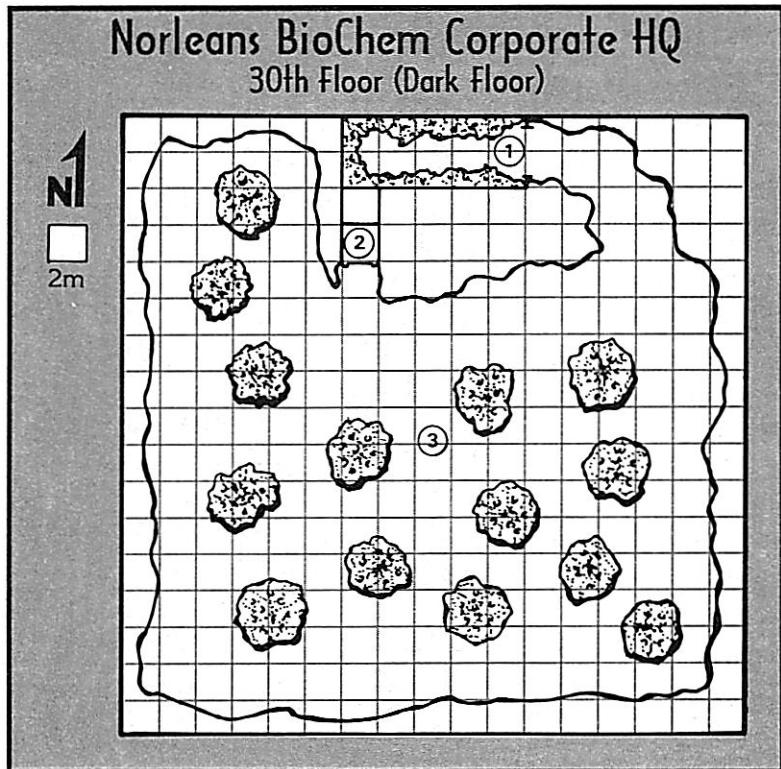
The radio is unable to transmit to the brain slice(s), and can only receive and relay the impulses it gets.

7—Car Room: Surprisingly, the PCs find a Chrysler LeBoeuf here. It's parked in the center of the chamber and looks like it was taken right off the street. The license plate and everything else identifying the owner have been removed.

8—Information Room: Stored here are tons of paper in the form of newspapers and documents. If the PCs look through them, they'll find that the papers aren't from Norleans BioChem but from all of the other corporations in New Orleans. Most of them are rather dry financial and personnel records which might be of interest to a corporation with the resources to sift through them for trends, but are a hopeless informational overload of minute detail for most PCs.

9—Fashion Room: Stacked to the ceiling are examples of every type of human fashion. There are samples of T-shirts, suits, shoes, pants, sunglasses, jewelry—everything. There are even examples of tribal costumes from around the world.

The room is so full of things that it is really too difficult to effectively search the room without carting things out of it to make room to search. Even after such an effort, the characters will not find anything of value, aside from some jewelry that could be sold.



10—Space Publications: The insectoids are apparently avid readers of numerous human publications about space theories. Included in this room are samples of all of Earth's space-related magazines, newspapers and newsletters. Certainly, the room isn't big enough to contain a complete set of all the publications, but there is at least one sample of everything.

If the PCs actually look through the material, they will find that *UFO* magazine samples are the most common here.

Floor 29

1—Gelatinous Spine.

2—Executive Elevator.

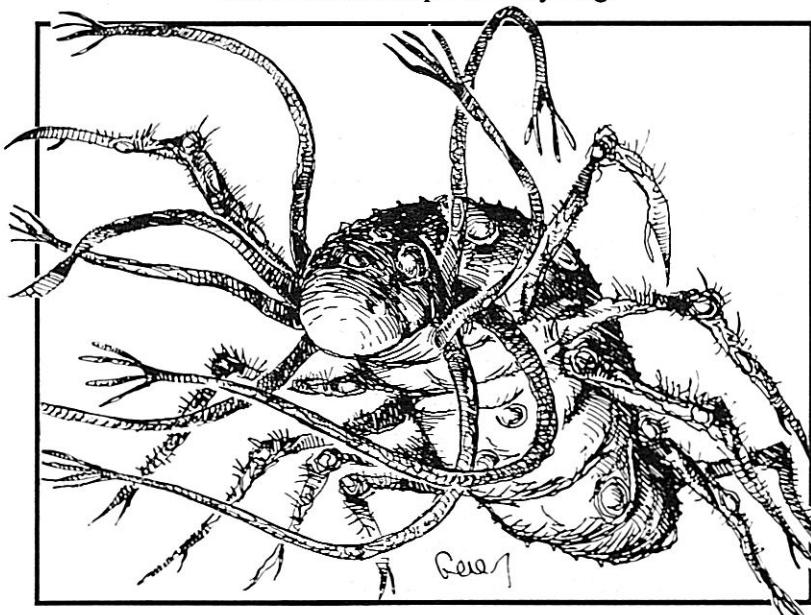
3—Lounge: This room contains lounge furniture (two office-type sofas, three chairs and a large coffee table). The coffee table has a large, heavily illustrated book on it: *The UFO's Effect on Mass Hysteria*.

4—Telescope Room: Like the rooms on the floor below, this room contains samples of human objects. In this case: telescopes. They are stored in a haphazard manner, and many sets are damaged. Only optical telescopes are represented here.

5—Scale Model Room: Situated on a large table in the center of the room are several scale models of large structures. Things like the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty stand beside nuclear power plants, large bridges, space shuttles, rockets, and other technological achievements.

6—Zenit Room: Resting among the wreckage of a partial launch tower (it looks like a section of a launch tower was "snipped" out of the middle of a whole one—down to severed cables and conduits—and then this piece was disassembled) are two disassembled (but complete) Zenit rockets (page 127 of *Dark Conspiracy*). If one of the characters is an astronaut and inspects the rocket components, he or she will find that several new computer chips have been added to them, particularly to the navigation boards. If the chips are taken and analyzed later, the characters will find that the navigation coordinates all have to do with lunar orbits and assorted points on the lunar surface. One of the rocket's chips has a deep space mission programmed into it—a mission to Io.

Strangely, these rockets are clearly unable to achieve the missions for which they have been programmed. They would not be able to carry enough fuel nor do they have sophisticated control





jets to conduct landings, complex orbital manuvers or deep space missions.

Strangest of all is the question of how the rockets came to be in the room—the insectoids used a dimension walk device.

7—Empty Room: This room is empty.

8—Mound Room: These two rooms contain strange, three-foot high mounds of gelatinous material. (The purpose of these mounds is described in under floor 30, below.)

Floor 30

1—Gelatinous Spine.

2—Executive Elevator.

3—Grand Meeting Room: This room contains 14 four-foot high mounds of gelatinous material. The material is the same as is found coating the gelatinous spine. Seated on each of the mounds is an insectoid ET. (The statistics for the insectoids in this room are located at right). Once the insectoids see the PCs, which will be as soon as they enter the chamber, they will immediately move to attack.

The insectoids will make no effort to communicate with the PCs, and will not listen to anything they have to say. The fact that the PCs are even here indicates to the insectoids that the PCs are hostile, since they *never* allow humans onto this floor.

The insectoids are highly intelligent, and will attack the most dangerous threats first. The referee should make every effort to manage the insectoids' tactics as effectively as possible. Since they do not have any weapons on them, the insectoids will use their empathic skills and brute force to kill the PCs.

It should be understood that the insectoids will kill the PCs if they can. They have no mercy and no interest whatsoever in keeping the PCs alive. The referee should make this combat one of the two most vicious and life-threatening encounters of the module (if not the most vicious, given the number of insectoids).

However, this is one of the most rewarding battles, as well. The repercussions of killing the insectoids are covered in *Squashing the Insectoids*, on page 44.

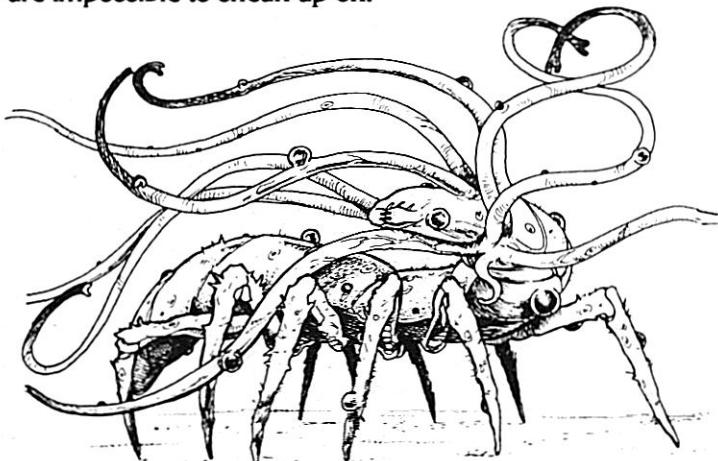
NORLEANS BIOCHEM INSECTOID ETs

Strength: 10	Education: 10	Move: 8/15/30/40
Constitution: 8	Charisma: 5	Skill/Dam.: 7/5
Agility: 5	Empathy: 7	Hits: 20/40
Intelligence: 9	Initiative: 5	# Appear: 14

Special: Armor value 1 versus everything except laser weapons. Animal Empathy 10 (insects only, as per standard insectoid ETs found on page 219 of *Dark Conspiracy*), Cryokinesis 7 (Cryokinesis is covered on page 74 in the "Referee Resources" chapter), Electronics 9, Foreboding 4, Interrogation 8, English 5, Japanese 5, Spanish 5, Leadership 7, Melee Combat 7, Observation 9, Physics 10, Project Thought 7, Psychology (Human) 9, Vessel Use (UFO) 8

Description: These insectoids look nothing like anything on Earth. It is only because they have a natural empathic control over insects that they are even classified as insects. They have a large, 10-foot-long central body with 10 legs extending from them (five on each side). They have heads, but they are barely discernable, and rest on the tops and centers of the main bodies. Surrounding an insectoid's head are several, from eight to 15, tentacles that each end in a series of delicate mandibles that serve as fingers. The tentacles are 20 feet long, and the legs are seven feet long and have two segments to them.

The body, legs and arms have on them numerous red, glowing sacks that resemble balloons. The sacks apparently fill and contract at irregular intervals. These sacks serve as eyes. Since the insectoids' bodies are covered with them, they are impossible to sneak up on.





INSECTOID PURPOSE AND STRATEGY

These insectoids are the highly skilled, true leaders of Norleans BioChem, and several other large corporations. Each one of them has been trained with skills to enable it to gather information about the Earth and to control its corporations.

The insectoids' purpose in New Orleans at the moment is to destroy the Nexus of Evil and to take control of the other corporations in the city. These two goals are being pursued simultaneously, and the insectoids have made good progress toward each end, though they are more successful at taking over other companies.

If their lives are significantly threatened, they will scramble for the gelatinous spine and work their way down it to safety. If cornered, they will not commit suicide, but may let themselves be killed or captured. If they are captured, they will attempt to escape if they can.

A favorite escape ploy they will use is to play dead. If one of them takes numerous hits, and lives, it will fall to the ground and feign death. Since the insectoids know the PCs have never seen the likes of them before, they know that the PCs cannot know for sure when any of them are dead—they have no pulse even when alive. They will then attack when a human gets close.

They communicate to each other with their Project Thought skills. They secrete the gelatinous material of the mounds when they are fed enough human flesh, and they artistically shape the material into mounds for themselves to sit on during their conferences.

SQUASHING THE INSECTOIDS

If the PCs manage to destroy the insectoids, they will have seriously set the plans of that race back a few months at least. The insectoid race will have to send more trained insectoids to Earth to continue their comrades' work, and this will take at least a month to set up.

Once back on Earth, the new insectoids will abandon direct control of Norleans BioChem and instead work through a subsidiary of Norleans BioChem that the former group of insectoids had gained a firm hold of fiscally. This enables them to start again without having to build a brand new power base.

The total lag time between the moment the last insectoid dies to the time the new ones are in place and begin to carry out their missions is two months. After that time, the threat to humanity will have returned. If that expeditionary force is also killed, then no further efforts will be made in the United States, and the insectoids will relocate to Beijing, China.





The characters have a variety of reasons to go to the pumping station. Foremost among them is to discover what exactly is going on there and to see if it has anything to do with Lou's disappearance.

What is important in the adventure about the station is that the PCs are there when it is attacked and that they see one of the executives flee into the swamp.

No matter what time the PCs go to the pumping station, under whatever circumstances or purpose, they will encounter the Norleans BioChem guards, the execs and the attack.

DESCRIPTION

The pumping station is used to take water out of Lake Maurepas and deliver it to a purification/desalinization complex five miles away. Norleans

BioChem uses the station to pump pesticide into the lake by stopping the pump, connecting it to tanker trucks and reversing the action.

Norleans BioChem could merely pour its chemicals into the lake, but it wants to use the pump to force it into the lake, increasing the pesticide's reach.

The pump was constructed just a few years ago, and is elevated on pillars, and extends into the lake itself. Its operation is sporadic, and it is usually turned on when there is a water shortage or when the Lake Pontchartrain pumps are off for maintenance. As part of an experiment conducted by the electric company, the pump station receives its power from underground cables.

All of the guards are armed with Colt M1911A1 automatic pistols and MP-7s. Some guards, in addition, carry special equipment such as flame-



throwers or rocket launchers, and they are noted on the key to the map to the pumping station.

The M9A1 flamethrower is on page 298 of *Dark Conspiracy*. The LAW 80 is on page 297 of *Dark Conspiracy*.

Key to the Station

1—Security Car: This is like the other Norleans BioChem security vehicles stored in the truck dock next to the corporate headquarters (see page 37), with the exception that it has a sunroof and an M60 machinegun (page 294 of *Dark Conspiracy*) mounted on the roof. Two guards are sitting in it.

2—Executives: These appear to be executives who are talking amongst each other. If the characters are equipped with any type of listening device,

they can listen to the conversation related below:

Exec. 1: "Things seems okay now. We haven't seen anything so far."

Exec. 2: "Yeah, but you never know. We should have brought more guards."

Exec. 3: "More? I agree with Bob. We have enough already. Besides, the first drivers were only spooked by something. They're suffering from hysteria. After all, how many of them have even been outside the metro area? Hell, they'd freak out over seeing a lump of seaweed."

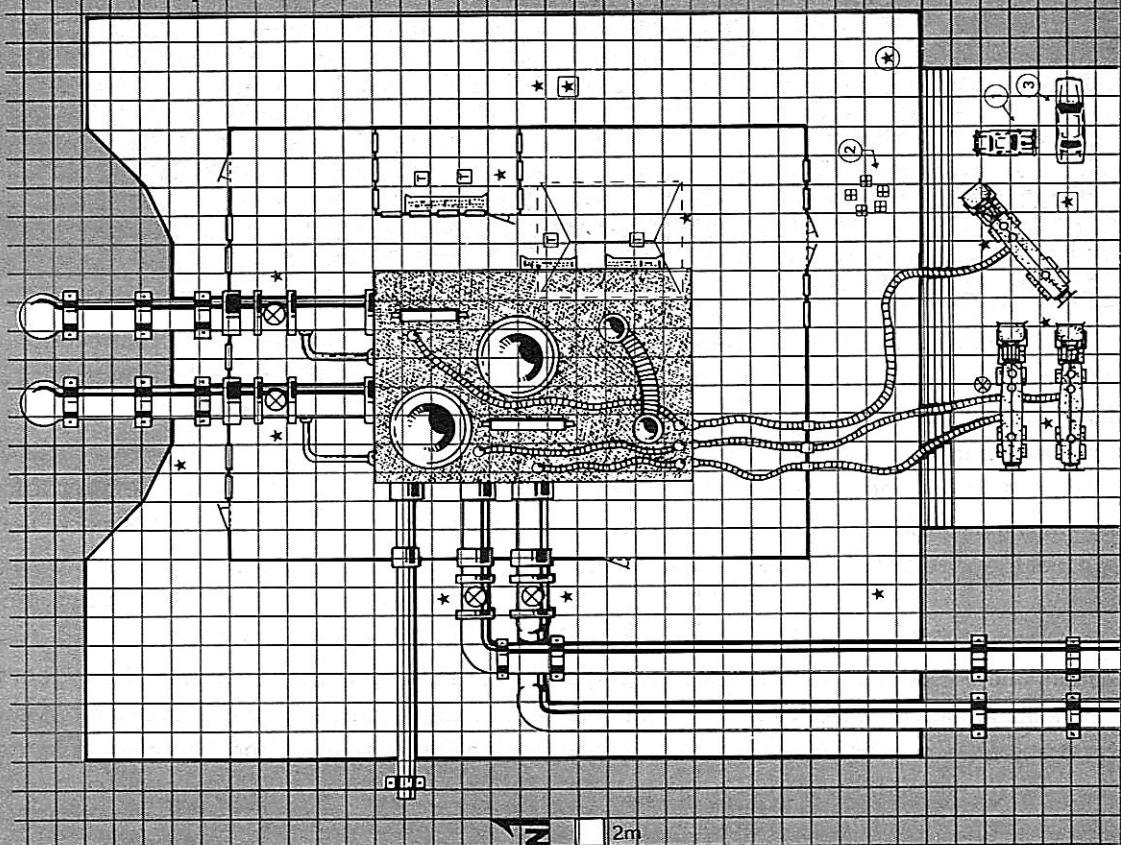
Just then, the pumping station is attacked. See page 47 for resolving the attack.

3—Limousine: This is the limousine the executives came in. Their chauffeur waits inside patiently.

KEY

- ★ Guard
- Technician
- ★ Guard w/LAW
- ★ Guard w/flamethrower
- Door
- Window
- ⊗ Valve
- ~~~~ Flexible pipe
- ===== Stairs
- ==== Computer console
- Truck
- Pipe supports
- ~~~~ Skylight

Maurepas Lake



Lake Maurepas Pumping Station



PUMPING STATION ATTACK

The station is attacked by creatures that would make anyone "freak out" as one of the executives put it (on page 46). The exact creatures and actions for each are described below by direction of attack.

Just before the attack, every PC that has the Foreboding skill will have a deep sense of oppression. They will feel something evil and malicious creeping out of the swamp and toward the station like a fog. The closer the attack comes, the more anxious the PCs should feel. It feels like a giant hand is closing in around them, and it is about to crush the station in its grasp.

When the attack begins, each force attacks simultaneously. A surprise blitzkrieg effect is desired by the Dark Minions. The player characters, if they are visible on the station platform, will be attacked along with the Norleans BioChem personnel. However, there are a few things that should happen.

First, the PCs should be allowed to escape. They aren't wearing Norleans BioChem uniforms and they don't look like the executives, so chances are they might not even be attacked at all. Second, one of the executives must escape, and the PCs should be encouraged to follow him. As soon as the attack starts, all but one of the executives runs for the executive limousine, which is promptly blown to bits by a cobra person.

Seeing this, the lone executive starts running into the swamp instead. Strangely, he isn't attacked by any of the harpies or cobra people. Through the frenzy of the battle, the PCs should be able to follow the exec into the swamp, where they can question him later.

It's important to emphasize the significance of the executive's actions, so the PCs will follow him into the swamp. Entering the swamp begins the next part of the adventure, detailed in the chapter on "The Swamps" beginning on page 48.

North Side: From the depths of the lake come three thin tentacles. They are easily 100 meters in

length and about five centimeters thick. They flail up from the lake and wrap themselves around the bottom floor of the station to try to prevent escape. Those inside the station will be able to shoot at the tentacles, but will not be able to damage them enough to sever their grip.

Above: Unfortunately for those trapped inside, there's a skylight at the top of the station that's about to be exploited.

Twenty-five harpies fly over the station, dropping logs and other heavy swampland debris on the guards (damage for these drops is 1D10-2, minimum of 1). After they have dropped their loads, the harpies will swoop down onto the guards and attack with their feet. Ten harpies will enter the station, try to kill everyone inside and then fly out. These harpies will drop their objects onto the skylight to break it before they fly through it. They are trying to attack as quickly as possible—they know that the humans' ranged weapons put them at a disadvantage.

The harpies are counting on general confusion to distract the humans, and they plan to have two of their number attack each human. Particular attention will be paid to the executives, and all efforts will be made to prevent their escape.

The statistics for these harpies are given on page 77.

East: This side of the station is not attacked.

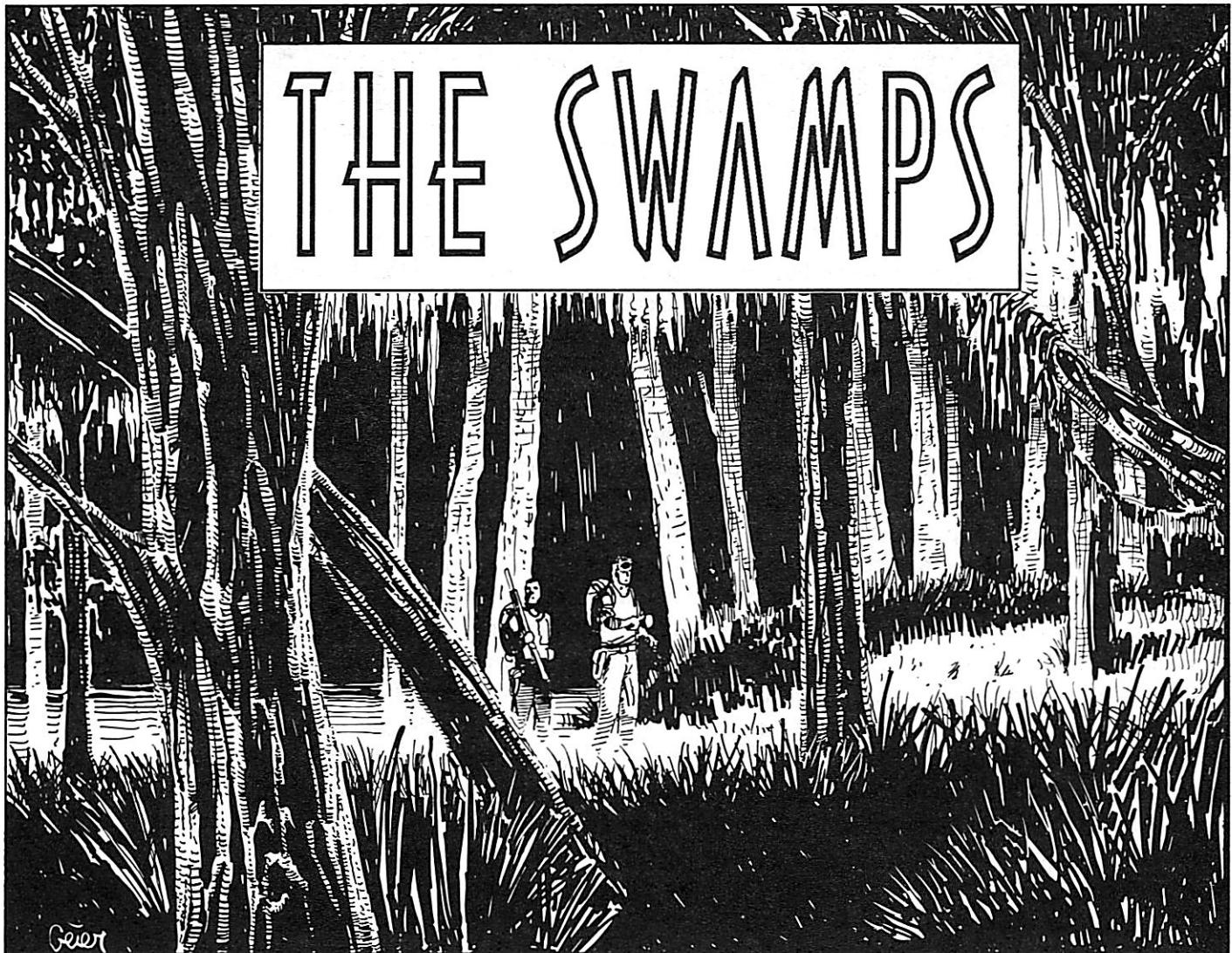
South: Emerging from the swamp and rushing onto the southern edge of the station are 10 cobra people. In addition to their natural attacks, they are all carrying weapons identical to the Norleans BioChem guards. Half of them carry MP-7s, the others carry LAW 80s.

Their task is to destroy all vehicles and to shoot the Norleans BioChem guards while they are distracted by the harpies.

They aren't wearing any armor and are rushing the humans on foot, but their quickness and Initiative will make up for that (they hope).

The statistics for these cobra people are given on page 77.

West: Nothing attacks from this direction.



GETTING THERE

The PCs by now should have a reason or two to enter the swamps. The most straightforward reason is in pursuit of the executive who ran from the Lake Maurepas pumping station when the attack began.

Another reason is to generally explore the swamp based on any clues the PCs might have picked up along the way. Remember that if they go to investigate the pumping station, they will find Norleans BioChem guards and executives already there. For the purpose of this module, there's no way to avoid them.

Another possibility is that the PCs may have approached New Orleans from the Gulf of Mexico and somehow had to go through part of the swamp to get to New Orleans.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The swamp is generally not a good place to be in

the world of *Dark Conspiracy*. There is almost nothing redeeming about it, and it's a miserable experience for everyone. What the characters see, feel and hear is described below. Care should be taken when describing the swamp to make it feel as oppressive as possible. Not only should nature bear down on the party, but a general feeling of evil pervades the landscape. Characters with empathy skills, Foreboding in particular, should feel the evil wrapping around them like a second skin.

Sight

Visually, swamps can be beautiful to behold. There are thousands of varieties of plant life which make stunning displays. This swamp is no different. In fact, there are more unusual plants and creatures lurking in the swamps around New Orleans than ever, each one commanding attention by visitors.

Tall trees without branches, except at the top



stretch to the sky to gather ample sunlight. Pools, rivers and small lakes in shades from green to gray lie on carpets of the softest moss, which have their own infinite shades of green and brown.

Flowers of every color bloom virtually year round in the steady climate of the swamps around New Orleans. In places, situated on shifting islands of peat and moss, thousands of them can gather to create a field of vibrant colors, all swaying with the gentle breezes.

No matter where one looks, the sight of the swamp's abundant growth and fertility is inescapable.

Touch

Looking at a picture postcard is one thing; being there is quite another.

As with New Orleans, the first thing the PCs will notice in the swamp is the extreme heat. Even in places where the trees blot out the sun almost completely, the heat and humidity are almost overwhelming. It will be as if the PCs are walking through a large, green oven.

An interesting irony is that the PCs will want to dress coolly, but they will have to wear long pants and probably long-sleeved shirts to prevent being scratched by the abundant undergrowth and thorny bushes, vines and plants that lace the swamp.

The ground is soft almost everywhere. Even where there are dirt roads, one's feet fall on a cushion-like ground. This makes walking travel more difficult. Although it's easy walking for the first few minutes, the strain on the ankles and feet to maintain balance begin to take its toll.

For these reasons, a character can only travel on foot in the swamps around New Orleans for a number of hours equal to half his or her Constitution rating, rounded up, per day without resting for at least an hour. If rest is not taken after the indicated period, a person's movement rate (while not in combat) is halved. A person cannot pursue more than three periods of foot travel without rest.

Speed of travel on foot is still generally the full amount (four kilometers per hour for humans).

But, travelling at full cruise speed is difficult, hence the endurance rule stated in the previous paragraph.

See page 108 in *Dark Conspiracy* for more details about travelling through swamps.

Evil

Throughout the swamp, evil is in the air.

Characters without any Empathy skills are constantly aware of some sort of intangible ill-feeling when they are in the swamp. They may not be able to put their finger on it, but they are definitely aware that something's not right about the swamp.

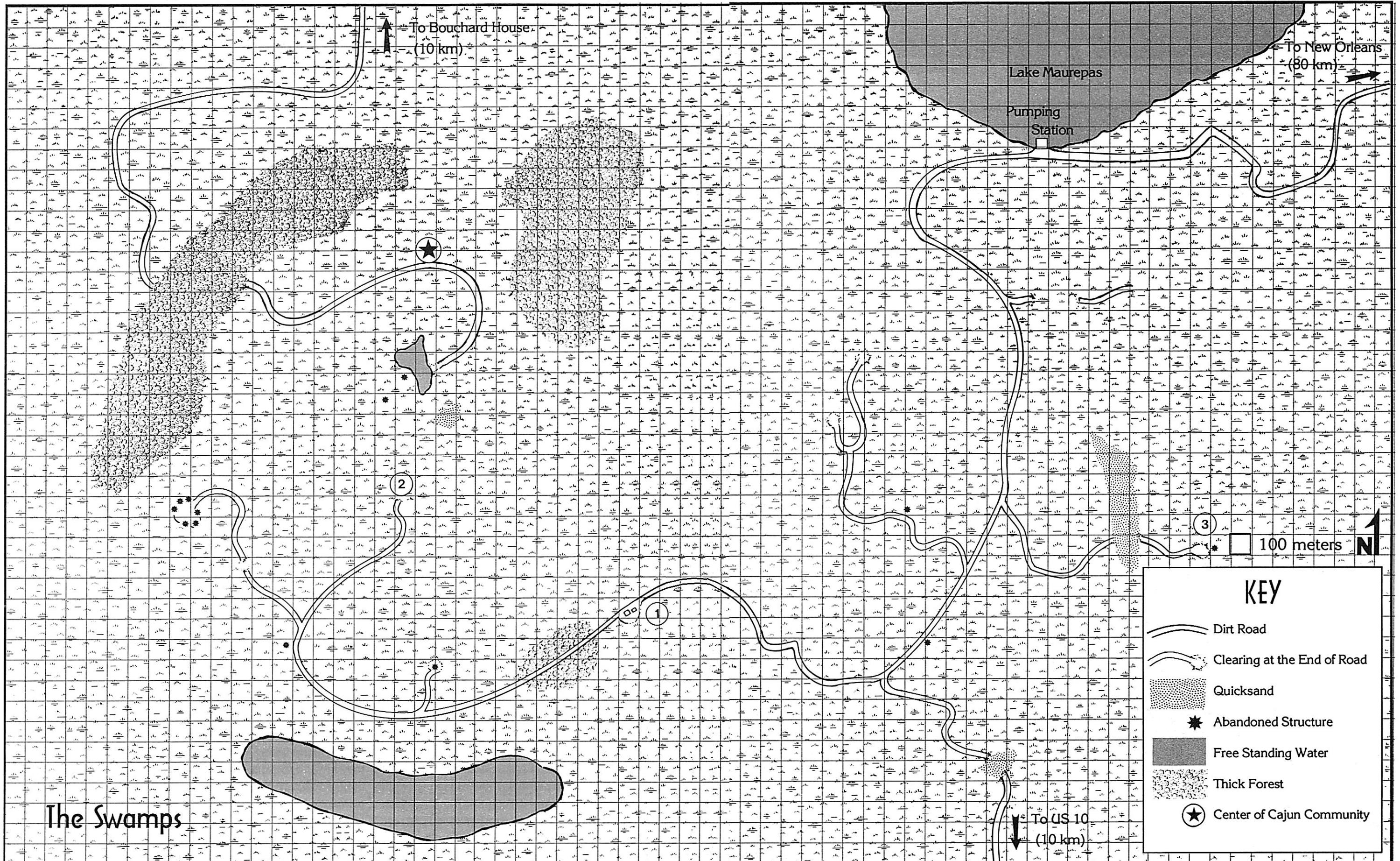
Characters with Empathy skills, especially Foreboding, are especially hard hit with the feeling. While travelling through the swamp, every plant and shadow seems to hold an evil waiting to be released.

The source of the evil is a malevolent creature which has rooted itself in the swamp. Its tendrils have extended into a web that blankets a large section of the swamp. The creature also has an extremely powerful Plant Empathy skill that connects it nearly to the entire swamp.

SWAMP ENCOUNTERS

A variety of things can happen to people while they are going through the swamps, some of them are detailed below. The explanations for some of the notations on the map of the swamp are on pages 52 and 53.

The referee should feel free to introduce any encounter desired. Swamps hold a lot of opportunities for many discoveries, which could range from lost villages and secret cults, to UFO crashes and archaeological finds. People usually build things hoping to use them for some time, but then find that they have to move away for whatever reason, and they are abandoned. Sometimes the buildings are dismantled and the materials go with the owners, other times, they are left behind. The results are isolated structures that sometimes stick out in the middle of nowhere. One could find an outhouse in a





clearing in this swamp, and nothing else nearby.

Above all, swamps hide whatever is inside them from the outside world, and this allows all sorts of activities to go on without anyone knowing about them. The abundant growth is quick to reclaim ground, hiding all traces of habitation and activity.

Swamp Map Key Explanations

Quicksand: There are many types of quicksand in swamps. Roll 1D3 (roll 1D6, and consider a result of 1 or 2 as 1, 3 or 4 as 2 and 5 or 6 as 3) on the table below to determine the type of quicksand the party encounters. (Example, a roll of 1 equals watery quicksand, etc.)

1—Watery: This type of quicksand is little more than water with a little sand and other matter mixed in. It's not difficult to get out of, as characters can merely swim out of it (provided they have the Swimming skill).

2—Viscous: More sand than water means trouble for PCs. When it is encountered, the PCs will sink rapidly until they are submerged. It is possible to get out, but only after passing an Average: Strength test. The character then has to pass an Average: Swimming skill test. Failure results in drowning.

3—Thick: Dense quicksand means player characters sink immediately to waist depth, then start to

slowly sink. It takes from one to three minutes to sink completely into this type of quicksand. This means that the characters have from two to six combat turns to save themselves or be saved. Self-removal requires a Difficult: Strength test and some means of pulling oneself out. The quicksand is too dense for anyone to swim out of. Others can assist in pulling trapped characters out, but a combined Strength of at least 5 is required.

Abandoned Structure: All types of things are built by people who live in the swamp. For whatever reason, they move away or die, leaving their structures behind. The type of structure varies, and the table below should be consulted to indicate what type of structure is encountered. Roll 1D6:

1—Small House: A one-story house that looks like it was built with sturdiness in mind. It seems to have been abandoned for years. The interior is unfurnished.

2—Small Shack: This building appears to be a toolshed or something similar. The interior could contain anything from rusted, obsolete tools to rotted meat hung to smoke but never claimed.

3—Large House: A large one-story or two-story house that's long been abandoned. These are more common than one might think, because the Greater Depression forced many people to move into the metroplexes, especially New Orleans. The swamp has been quick in covering the house with growth, so getting inside it is difficult. The interior is empty, unless the referee desires the party to encounter some sort of beastie or even derelicts.

4—Vehicle: In a swamp, when a vehicle finally dies, its body is left behind. There is no towing service or anyone available to come out to the interior of the swamp to make a repair. Therefore, one either repairs it by oneself or it's abandoned. A wide variety of vehicles are abandoned for a variety of reasons. The referee should choose the type of vehicle encountered, though pickup trucks and other utility-related vehicles will be the most commonly found.

5—Settlement: A small village or group of structures is found abandoned. The most likely





cause of this is a resource that was hunted or gathered ran out, and the people in the settlement moved on. These are common in the swamps around New Orleans, especially given the Greater Depression and the recent decline in natural wildlife. The interiors of all of the structures are almost certainly empty.

6-Assorted: This category represents the lost articles that can be found lying in the swamp. Examples include rusted oil drums, wood piles, scrap metal, and animal skeletons. The reason for these articles being there are limitless, but all have been long forgotten by their owners.

Specific Encounters

Here are the explanations for the specific encounters indicated on the map.

1—Yellow Zombie: (See page 231 of Dark Conspiracy.) The PCs discover a dilapidated shack that was apparently a gas station years ago. It appears to have been abandoned for at least four decades.

Sitting on a wood pile outside the shack is a man in his mid-forties dressed in hiking clothes and gear, who looks like he was hiking through the swamp and is now sitting down for a rest. As the PCs approach, (either by car or on foot), the man will take no notice of them.

Unfortunately, he's "resting" because he's on his way to becoming a yellow zombie. The infection is two days old, and it's having quite a toll on his senses and sense of reality. He is lucid only 60% of the time he's awake. When the PCs talk to him, he'll come around and be lucid for a few hours, then slip into a delirium. Even during the times he's lucid, he'll be extremely confused as to where he is and what's going on.

The PCs will be able to notice a faint yellowish pallor about him.

If they question him about the fleeing executive or the evil that pervades the swamp, he'll have the following to say:

"Oh, I know there's evil here. I know firsthand. I had my car stolen 10 years ago, and it was as blue as the grass. Very pretty. In fact, even yesterday I



saw this kind gentleman passing on the street. He offered to give me a hand, but I told him I already had two—heh, heh. He went on his way, down the black road to Oregon."

Obviously, even though lucid, he's a little out of touch. If the PCs are determined enough and ask the right questions multiple times, they will be able to glean enough information to determine that the poor man is infected with some sort of organism (the one that causes yellow zombism), and that the executive indeed walked up the road passing the man. The hiker's sense of time is totally inaccurate, so he will not be able to be of any help in that area.

The only thing on him are his clothes. He lost all his personal items and equipment shortly after he was infected.

2—Swamp Sponges: A nest of these pernicious creatures have congregated at the end of the road, which is near a water hole. They are wild and have taken to waiting for animals to come along to drink from the pool, which happens to be poisoned. The poison is a toxin that has crept into the pool from leaking drums of industrial waste buried nearby. The toxin causes any creature drinking from the pool to become disoriented, reducing its capacity to recognize danger and flee from it.



After a creature drinks from it, the swamp sponges surround the unwitting animal and move in for the kill.

If the PCs arrive by car, the swamp sponges will be aware of it (because of the noise and vibrations of the vehicle) and will start to move to the car to surround it. Generally, the PCs should have no trouble getting away from the swamp sponges, since they are alert and in a relatively open space (i.e., the sponges can't corner them anywhere).

If the PCs arrive at this spot on foot, the sponges will be less aware of them and only 1D6 will move against the PCs.

The statistics for the swamp sponges are found in the "Referee Resources" chapter on page 78.

3—Swamp Slither: Waiting patiently near an abandoned shack is a swamp slither. It will be able to sense the PCs' arrival and will wait for one of them to walk into the shack. It is positioned in front of the door (underground). If it senses that no one is going into the shack but the prey is instead bypassing it, the slither will attempt to devour the closest PC to it by tunneling toward it.

The statistics for the swamp slither are in the "Referee Resources" chapter on page 78.

NPC Encounters

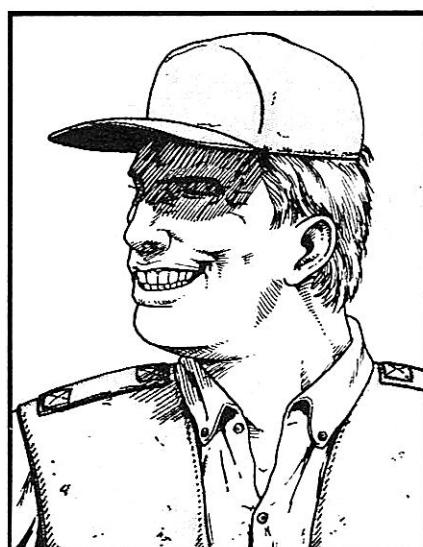
Patrick
Fitzmorris

In addition to the beastie encounters listed above, some NPCs can be encountered in the swamp, as

well. The explanations, statistics and locations for the NPC encounters are located on the following pages.

SWAMP NPCs

The NPCs on this page represent people the PCs may encounter in the swamp. They are detailed below so the referee can use them to assist the PCs if they need it. Each of the NPCs here is willing to help the PCs in some capacity if persuaded



to. Since most of them are suffering from Norleans BioChem's chemical and pesticide dumping, they will be easy to recruit if the PCs express their anti-Norleans BioChem sentiments.

If the PCs aren't in need of any assistance, then the encounters with these NPCs can be skipped, and the NPCs used in other adventures the referee designs.

Patrick Fitzmorris, Hunter

Although Patrick is of average height, in his mid-forties and a little overweight, he is an excellent armed combatant and has enormous endurance. This talent becomes obvious when the PCs meet him.

Attracted by the noise, the PCs are aware of a fight before they see it. When they eventually get to the fight which is taking place in a clearing, they see Patrick holding off three wolf-type creatures with the blunt end of his rifle. Just as one of the wolves hesitates to look at the PCs, Patrick clubs it in the head, and it drops to the ground. The other creatures see the PCs and their fallen companion and flee.

As they run, Patrick fumbles with a gun he keeps in a concealed holster in the small of his back. He eventually gets it out, and fires two shots at the running beasties.

When the PCs ask him about the incident, he'll have the following to say:

"Damn things aren't from this swamp, they're from hell! I've been hunting here for two decades, and I can tell you there ain't never been anything like those things in here—ever. I don't know what did it, but something's happened to turn the wildlife in this swamp upside down."

"I was stalking a deer, when I was ambushed by three of those things. They jumped down from the trees if you can believe it. I was lucky, and they missed me. I unloaded my rifle at them, but they were too quick. Had to resort to clubbing them."

"I'm glad you people came along, though. You distracted one of 'em just long enough."



The statistics for the wolf-things are in the "Referee Resources" chapter on page 79.

Patrick will offer to guide the PCs anywhere in the swamp. He's extremely familiar with most of it, due to his hunting experience. He tends to stay away from the Cajun population, explaining that they aren't on the best of terms, due to conflicts over hunting territory.

Patrick is very well dressed (in hunting clothes), uses a Parker Hale (page 287 of *Dark Conspiracy*) to hunt with. He carries a Walther PPK (page 282 of *Dark Conspiracy*) in a holster in the small of his back (it's not very concealed, but could easily be overlooked when he wears his fluorescent orange hunting vest). He carries no equipment other than his weapons, a compass, and a pair of binoculars. He hikes from his house in the swamp (24 kilometers east of the party's current position) and hikes back. He has become so adept at hiking through the swamps, that he can maintain a speed of eight kilometers per hour for several hours.

Experience: Elite

Attributes: 6; CON 10, INT 7

Skills: 6; Horsemanship 3, French 3, Navigation 7 (10 in the swamp), Observation 7, Small Arms (Rifle) 9, Stealth 2, Tracking 8

Initiative: 5

Motivation: *Heart King:* Patrick is very honest, and is willing to help the PCs if they are in need. He'll be especially eager to help if the PCs tell him that they may be able to restore the natural wildlife to the swamp. *Club Nine:* He is also very good at hunting and killing animals. Although he has enough control to keep the violence in his life restricted to hunting, he is very dangerous once he lets the darker part of himself loose.

Louis D'arman, Trapper

When the player characters encounter Louis, they will see a simply dressed, elderly man of a little below average height kneeling over a trap trying to pry it open. He'll notice their approach, but will

concentrate on the trap.

When the PCs are over the trap, they'll see how far the wildlife of the area has mutated. Clutched in the jaws of the trap is a creature that is a hybrid of bear and deer. The result is a small, semi-furry animal with stubby stalks protruding from all over its body. Its predominant color is a kind of medium-tan, though there are shades of brown and black on its legs and head. Its jaw is severely misaligned.

Louis will relate the following experience:

"Just terrible, what those damn companies are doing to us. My traps are filled with twisted things just like this one, here. Damn shame. I've seen hundreds of small critters in my traps, every one of them unfit to eat or sell. All I get are things, like this."

"I don't know exactly what's doin' it, but I can tell you, it didn't happen before all them companies started ignoring the law and dumping their crap into the water around here. The sooner those people go down, the better."

If the PCs tell him about what they've seen at the Lake Maurepas pumping station, he'll volunteer to guide the PCs anywhere, and help out any way he can. He is armed with a Parker Hale rifle (see page 287 of *Dark Conspiracy*).

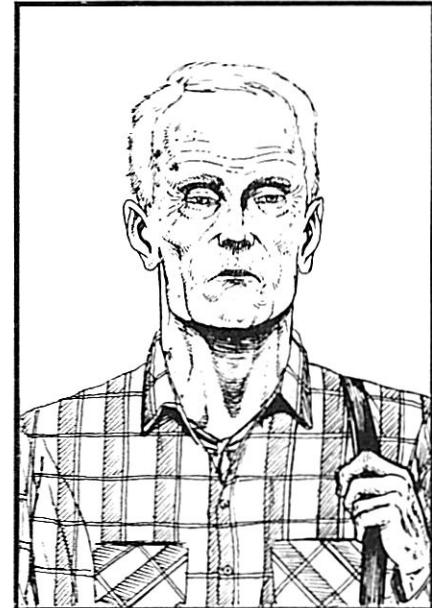
Experience: Veteran

Attributes: 5

Skills: 5; Tracking 6, Small Arms (Rifle) 6

Initiative: 4

Motivation: *Diamond Two:* Somewhat greedy. Louis is a trapper who is hurting because of the predominance of mutated wildlife. This has made him a little frantic to find something to support himself. He'll jump at the chance to help the PCs since he figures it will get his trapping back on track.

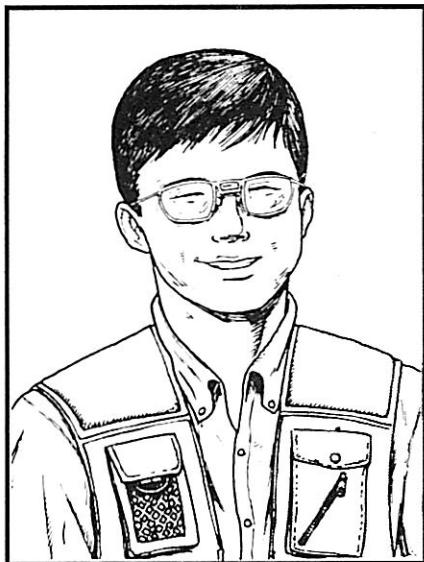


Louis
D'arman



Heart Four: Louis is easy to get along with. Once the PCs have talked with him for awhile, they will quickly come to like him.

Dr. Paul Takashi, Pharmacological Scientist



Dr. Paul
Takashi

Wherever the PCs encounter him, Paul will be crouched over a beautiful flower with red and yellow petals. His purpose in working in the swamp is to collect plants for examination to see what, if any, medicinal properties they have.

Paul is of average height and is in his mid-thirties. Although dressed for fieldwork in a swamp, his clothes indicate he's a yuppie at heart. His hiking boots are stylish, and he wears glasses with tinted lenses that have a wire-thin frame.

Although obviously of oriental descent, he is a native of America. His accent is midwestern, and he'll have the following to say to the PCs when they mention they've seen some strange animals and plants:

"Strange plants? Hell, you haven't seen the same things I have under the microscope. This swamp, I mean the whole thing, is infected with some kind of virus. I'm more of a pharmacological scientist than a botanist, looking for plants is only a strong hobby of mine, but I can tell you something is very wrong with the plant life here."

"I don't know what it is, and neither do the experts I've talked to, but there is something influencing the plants to grow against their natural pattern. Some common plants, like ferns and such are mutating more every week. This plant here, the flower, used to have fern-like leaves, not petals."

"I checked for chemicals. Everyone knows about the chemical companies around here, but they aren't responsible—not totally, anyway. Some-

thing is changing this swamp, mutating it into something totally unlike its natural condition."

Experience: Experienced

Attributes: 5

Skills: 4; Biology (Botany) 5, Chemistry 6, Medical (MD) 7

Initiative: 2

Motivation: *Heart Ace:* Paul sees the swamps as one of the greatest hopes for humanity to find the miracle drugs it needs. He's seen too many people—proles, especially—die from infections and diseases caused by modern society. He's committed himself to finding the cheapest, most effective drugs he can. One day he hopes to create drugs that are so efficient (price versus benefit) that all of the mega-corporations who have prole camps will buy the drugs, and distribute them, thereby saving thousands of lives. He sees the mutation of the swamp as a direct attack against human lives. Every day the mutating continues which means less chance of finding plants with the critical ingredients. *Spade Eight:* Although he will rarely manipulate anyone, he will if it means a substantial increase in his position. He isn't a person who would do such a thing lightly, nor would he do it with impunity, but rather with controlled, careful measures designed to accomplish just the task he wants.

THE CAJUNS

The PCs will eventually meet the people who know the most about what's going on in the swamp. The term *Cajuns* is used in this module to represent a small quasi-nomadic community that lives in the swamp that is composed of a number of different peoples and nationalities.

Meeting the Cajuns

There are a number of ways for the PCs to meet up with the Cajuns. The easiest is for them to find their community by accident (the location of their community is noted on the map on pages 50-51), while they are trekking through the woods. Another way is for one of the Cajuns to find the party while she or he is hunting or inspecting traps. How they



meet is not as important as the fact that the PCs meet the Cajuns, explain their problem finding the executive, and their curiosity about what has happened to the swamp.

If they say the right things and are willing to let the Cajuns take the lead, the party members will have an invaluable ally. If, for some reason, the PCs manage to irritate the Cajuns (by insulting their way of life or their accent, for example) then the PCs will find it much more difficult to rid the swamp of its evil.

A Haunting Tale

The following story can be related by any one of the Cajuns, at any time. A small collection of Cajun NPCs are described on pages 59 through 61, any one of whom could relate the tale. The referee should decide when to have one of the Cajuns relate the tale, to maximize its dramatic effect.

"This swamp hasn't gone to hell, it is hell. We haven't crossed over completely, but hell has come onto the Earth to show us what's in store. It spreads

more and more every day, bleeding out from the heart of the swamp, drowning us in its evil.

"I'll tell you how it started...

"A few months ago, this swamp of ours gave us what we needed, and we gave back to it. We and the swamp were brothers. But, then, something else moved in to the swamp. It lives to this day as an evil tumor in the growth, corrupting everything from within. We can't stop it.

"I can't tell you where it is, but I can tell you where it started. There's an old mansion deep in the swamp that was left long ago, during the civil war, I think. The swamp has long since grown over it, and it was forgotten by everyone.

"Then, the evil moved in. I hear from some of my brothers that a person moved in, hoping to restore it or some such garbage. Probably one of those gnomes from the 'plex come to open a resort. Anyway, I hear this guy gets to work on the house, and before long, has it cleaned of all the growth. He starts living there—the first to do so in over a hundred years.



"Another brother of mine tells me the gnome, called himself Bouchard, met up with him and wanted to do some tradin'. Well, we didn't know what he would have to offer us outside of cash, but we went to the house to find out what he wanted.

"When we got there, the whole house had been reclaimed by the swamp. I'm telling you, it was only three days since my brother left the house and we got back to it to talk, and to look at it, you'd say it hadn't been touched since the stone age. The whole damn mansion was covered, every inch, with thick growth from the swamp. Vines and weeds and strange flowers seemed to have wormed their way into the walls and looked like they might splinter the house into pieces.

"Well, we thought this Bouchard was another one of those scientists who always come to the swamp looking for pill mix or to take samples or what not, and that's how the swamp grew so quickly around the house. He must have used some chemical on his own yard.

"We called out for Bouchard. As we were standing

there, Christian, my cousin, got this bad feeling about him. He got real nervous all of a sudden, and said that the devil was going to come out of the ground and tear our limbs off.

"Well, that shook us up pretty bad. You see, Christian gets these feeling sometimes and he's almost always right. Now, we didn't think the devil himself was comin' up, but we sure knew something was.

"We were about to run for it when one of our number, I forget who, said that we ought to rescue Bouchard. His jeep was parked outside, maybe he was in the house still. So, we turned and ran into the house, kicking in the door, shouting his name.

"What we saw inside stopped us in our tracks. The walls were covered in flesh! There were cords like what's attached to babies and their mothers running everywhere—some were twitchin' and throbbing like they were alive. The floor was covered in some kind of clear fluid that stuck to our boots.

"Christian grabbed his head and went screaming out of the house. He said later that he got such a powerful feeling of evil that he couldn't take it. That's all it took for the rest of us, we took off running instantly.

"We never went back to it, and no one ever saw Bouchard again.

"Since then, the swamp has changed. Everything in it has changed. Christian is about to go mad because of the visions and feelings he gets. We can't calm him down, no matter what we do. Everyone has this feeling that we're all doomed—we're going down to hell and this swamp is taking us there.

"The animals are born twisted and dead. Those that live turn out sick and die shortly after. The traps are catching nothing but demons—that's what they have to be—demons, who are dragging us all down with them.

"And the plants...there ain't nothing like the plants we've seen. No two days are alike anymore. One patch of grass sprouts red and purple flowers one day, the next day those same flowers are black, twisted vines with purple thorns that sweat blood—blood!





"It all started with that mansion, and we are going back there in two days to burn it to the ground. Maybe that will stop things, maybe not. But if we're going to hell, we're taking that cursed house—and Bouchard—with us."

THE CAJUN COMMUNITY

If the PCs talk to the leader of the community, Louis Mitterand, described below, he will consider whatever the PCs have to say.

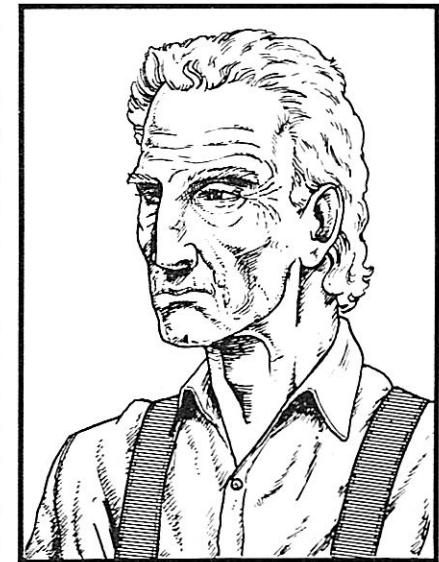
The Cajuns are armed with rifles and shotguns, and most of them—including women and children over the age of seven—carry some kind of firearm. The whole community is on edge and feels the same evil that the player characters do, only they've been exposed to it longer. Each Cajun is slightly paranoid, and trusting the PCs will be difficult. The PCs will have to show some sign of support for them (if one among the party has Medical skill for instance, that character could offer some assistance). The Cajun who related the tale will trust the PCs, and will argue for them if it comes down to that.

The reason the Cajuns are waiting to burn the mansion is that a small part of their group went into New Orleans to get enough fuel to burn the house completely. The party should be back in two days, whereupon the Cajuns will go directly to the house and destroy it.

The referee should keep in mind that this community is a closed society that has used the swamp as its home and livelihood for generations. A few the Cajuns go to work in New Orleans, and they certainly have a great deal of contact with society outside the swamp, but their social structure is closed in the sense that they have strict social laws and behaviors which maintain a way of life that is generations old.

They see the mutation of the swamp as the worst thing that could possibly happen to them. Not only is their home turning against them, but it literally *feels* evil to them. The thought of having to rely on outsiders for assistance is bad, but the thought of the community completely dying with the swamp is worse. Therefore, the Cajuns will eventually trust the PCs enough to let them help, but that trust will be slow in coming.

The PCs should have a lot to offer in assistance. The PCs most likely have superior weapons (at least newer ones). If there is an empathic character in the party, that person has valuable empathic skills. Christian, described above and detailed on page 60, has only one empathic skill (Foreboding), so any other skills the party has are very helpful. Finally, if the PCs have gone on at least one adventure before playing this module, they have more first-hand experience with the Dark Minions and fighting evil than any of the Cajuns.



*Louis
Mitterand*

Louis Mitterand

Louis is the leader of the community and among its most conservative members. But, the changes that have been occurring in the swamp have predisposed him to trust the PCs. He will need some convincing though. He's not about to put the safety of his people in the hands of strangers without some kind of reassurance that the PCs can be trusted.

Louis is tall and appears to be in his early sixties. He is quite physically fit, however, and occasionally goes hunting with some of the younger men in the community. Within the settlement he is a mechanic and sometimes goes into New Orleans to find work to earn some extra money. He has a wife and two children.

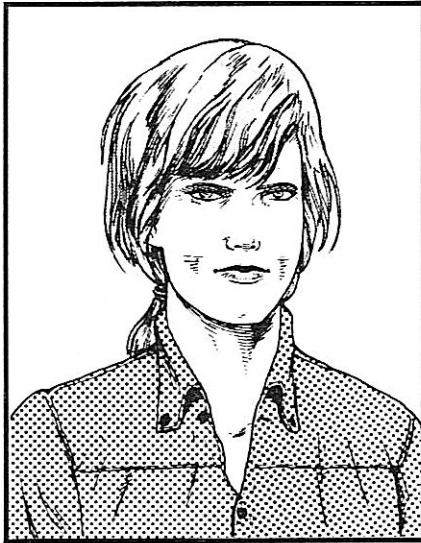
Experience: Elite

Attributes: 7

Skills: 6; English 9, French 10, Leadership 10, Mechanic 8, Navigation 10, Observation 4, Persuasion 9, Small Arms (Rifle) 8

Initiative: 5

Motivation: *Diamond Ace*: Louis is a very honest, just leader who wants nothing but the best for his people. It's this devotion that prompts him to go into



Angela
Wilson

there, but is absolutely committed to the fundamentals of the Cajun way of life.

Angela Wilson

Angela wasn't born into the Cajun community. She grew up in New Orleans and eventually became a graphic artist for one of the corporations. She took on all the trappings of the Gidget lifestyle (see page 174 of *Dark Conspiracy*).

It wasn't until she started seeing an eco-warrior romantically that she became aware of the things her own corporation was doing to the environment around New Orleans. The thought that she was

helping sell products that destroy the environment disturbed her so deeply that she became an eco-warrior like her boyfriend.

During a raid against Norleans BioChem, her boyfriend was killed, and she was wounded. She was taken in by the Cajuns and since then, she has trained them in marksmanship. She is considered to be the Cajuns' military leader, and she is the one that has been put in charge of destroying the Bouchard mansion.

Christian
Doubeton



New Orleans to earn extra money for his community. Even though he won't automatically trust the PCs from the start, he'll give them every chance to convince him. *Club Queer*: Louis is very set in his ways. He would argue with some validity that his own and others' commitment to Cajun custom and tradition has been the only thing that has kept the community together. Louis is open to some changes here and

She has 10 fragmentation grenades with her that she got from a contact.

If the PCs relate what they've seen in the Norleans BioChem corporate offices and what Norleans BioChem is doing at the Lake Maurepas pumping station, she will be the most enthusiastic and vocal supporter of the PCs.

She is in her mid-forties, but physical exercise (and her Gidget lifestyle) has kept her healthy. She looks like a person in her mid-thirties.

Experience: Veteran

Attributes: 5

Skills: 5; Demolitions 3, Instruction 6, Small Arms (Rifle) 6, Navigation 4

Initiative: 6 (She has taken to fire combat rather well.)

Motivation: *Club Ace*: Angela has become totally devoted to her cause of stopping the corporate destruction of the environment. She hopes that if she and others like her can do a sufficient amount of damage to enough expensive equipment that the corporations will stop their destruction and heed the demands of the people. *Club Queen*: Like Louis Mitterand, she is wholeheartedly devoted to her cause. She cannot be persuaded from it, nor should anyone want to try after talking with her.

Christian Doubeton

Out of all the members of the Cajun community, Christian is the only one with any empathic powers to speak of. A few members have a Foreboding skill of 1 or 2, but he is by far the most powerful.

This talent has not served him well lately. The evil pervading the swamp has amplified his skill to the point that he finds it difficult to shut out the terrible feelings and visions he experiences. Lately, he has been taking a cheap sleeping pill that is known to cause sleep, but prevents dreams from occurring. (Since dreams are the revitalizing ingredient in sleep, Christian is usually tired, mentally ragged and short-tempered. This dream-suppressive effect is also why the sleeping pills are so cheap.)



If asked about what he sees and feels, he'll simply say that what he sees is too terrible to describe, and that it's too taxing to talk about. If one of the player characters is a paraphysicist, then that person can help Christian. If that PC tries to use his or her Psychology skill to help him, success is automatic after half an hour of therapy. Christian will then relate the following:

"Nearly every time I close my eyes I see the swamp as a living monster, one whole aware, connected thing that seeks to devour us all."

"I don't know what its purpose is, but it's mutating the plants and animals to make it more like itself. Soon, very soon, the entire swamp will be one alien organism, with the mental power to control anyone."

"There is a central brain, a nexus point of evil buried in the swamp. I don't know where it is, perhaps in the Bouchard mansion. But everything emanates from that point."

If there are no paraphysicists available, then another character who has Psychology can try a task to help Christian at Average difficulty. Otherwise, to get Christian to open up requires a Difficult: Persuasion task and an hour of conversation. Or, if an empathic character is available and a Stage Two Human Empathy contact is made, Christian will feel confident enough to relate the dialogue.

From the dialogue, it's obvious that Christian is not like his fellows. The reason is that Christian has spent a lot of time educating himself and hopes to one day attend college in New Orleans. He will ask the player characters, when the swamp is cleansed of its evil, to help him get into college.

Christian is of average height and build for a 20-year-old male. His hair is black but the past few weeks of empathic anguish have caused a good deal of it to turn gray.

Experience: Novice

Attributes: 5

Skills: 2; Persuasion (Writing) 3, Foreboding 5, English 10, French 9

Initiative: 1

Motivation: *Heart Four:* Somewhat sociable. Christian would be more outgoing were it not for the

hellish visions that torment him. *Spade Seven:* Christian has demonstrated his ambition for education and attaining a higher place in society for himself through a good job. His self-education is the best example of this ambition.

Marshall Whitaker

Marshall came into the community many years ago, after he broke his leg in an accident in the swamp. He was nursed back to health by the Cajuns and decided to become a member of their community.

He shares many of the ideals of the Cajuns, especially that of maintaining the sanctity of the Cajun social structure. Marshall will be most vocal against employing the PCs' help. He doesn't trust the PCs at all, and won't no matter what they say. It would take some sort of good deed for him to accept the PCs, but even then, he won't turn his back to any of them.

Marshall is never without his Wildey Wolf (page 283 of *Dark Conspiracy*). He also carries a Winchester 1894 (page 287 of *Dark Conspiracy*) whenever he leaves the settlement.

He is short but stocky, and looks like he would be valuable in a fistfight. There is a close resemblance between him and Patrick Fitzmorris.

Experience: Experienced

Attributes: 5

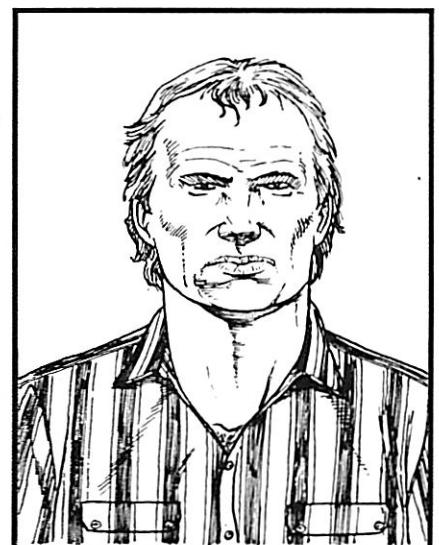
Skills: 4; Small Arms (Rifle)

5, Small Arms (Pistol) 6

Initiative: 3

Motivation: *Queen of Spades:* Marshall hungers for the leadership position of the community. He not only sees the PCs as an untrustworthy menace, but a threat to the power structure of the Cajun society. *Club Seven:* Although he knows violence isn't the answer all of the time, Marshall believes it is 90% of the time.

Marshall Whitaker





The Bouchard house is located at the end of a narrow, overgrown road which serves as a driveway. It's nestled comfortably amongst thick growth that covers it completely. The growth is so dense that little sunlight passes through the windows of the house. Even on the brightest of days, the interior of the house is totally dark.

The outside—at least those parts that aren't covered in twisted, thorny vines which ooze a sticky sap—is rotting away steadily. The paint has long since faded, and the boards are brittle in some places and mushy with moisture and termites in others. The roof has multiple holes from which several vines and other plants run in and out.

The whole structure seems doomed to collapse at any moment. If care is taken to look at the exterior, it can be seen that the house is leaning slightly to the left (as seen from the front, which faces south) and the western wall is buckling slightly.

There are six columns on the front of the house,

but three of them have rotted or have been eaten away to a mangled core. The others have simply been taken over by vines and now they are more plant than wooden column.

CORE OF EVIL

The most obvious thing to empathic characters is that the house is the center of the evil that permeates the swamp. There is no doubt of it. Any character with Foreboding, or any empathic skill, will feel the presence of a living malice.

As the wind blows through the trees, it tends to reverberate through the trunks that encircle the house and the grotesque vines which encrust the house. This creates hollow, muffled howls of wind. Every breeze, it seems, carries a moan of anguish with it.

The Spanish moss reaching toward the ground twitches and rustles in the wind as well, accompanying the moans with slow, writhing desperate-



looking motions. The whole effect combines to make it seem like the trees are alive with moaning ghosts, whose hands reach toward the party, pleading to be saved from the prison their souls are in.

CENTER OF MUTATION

The house and the grounds around it are obviously the center of the mutated growth. Looking at the house, it can be seen that the thorny vines that ooze a pus-like, sappy substance originate in the house and extend from it into the surrounding swamp. If the PCs went into the sewers, it's now that they realize that the vines stretch for miles, and looking at them in the daylight makes the PCs realize they are identical to the kinds of vines they encountered down in the sewers.

Some of the trunks of the vines are up to two meters thick, and their thorns are more than 10 centimeters long. They are so big, they threaten to bring down the house on their own, cracking the wooden walls like an eggshell.

The trees, encircling the house like living teeth, reach into the humid sky. Their trunks are thick and strong, even at the top. They seem to reach out to each other, forming a tangled canopy that reaches over the house, preparing to crush it totally in one, final grasp of its black tentacular fingers.

Indeed, the house does not look safe at all.

REFEREE INPUT

What is important to convey here is that, in addition to a very real evil hanging over the house like a cloak, nature itself has turned against the structure, and it is trying to reclaim it, to remove it from the Earth for the abominations it has caused.

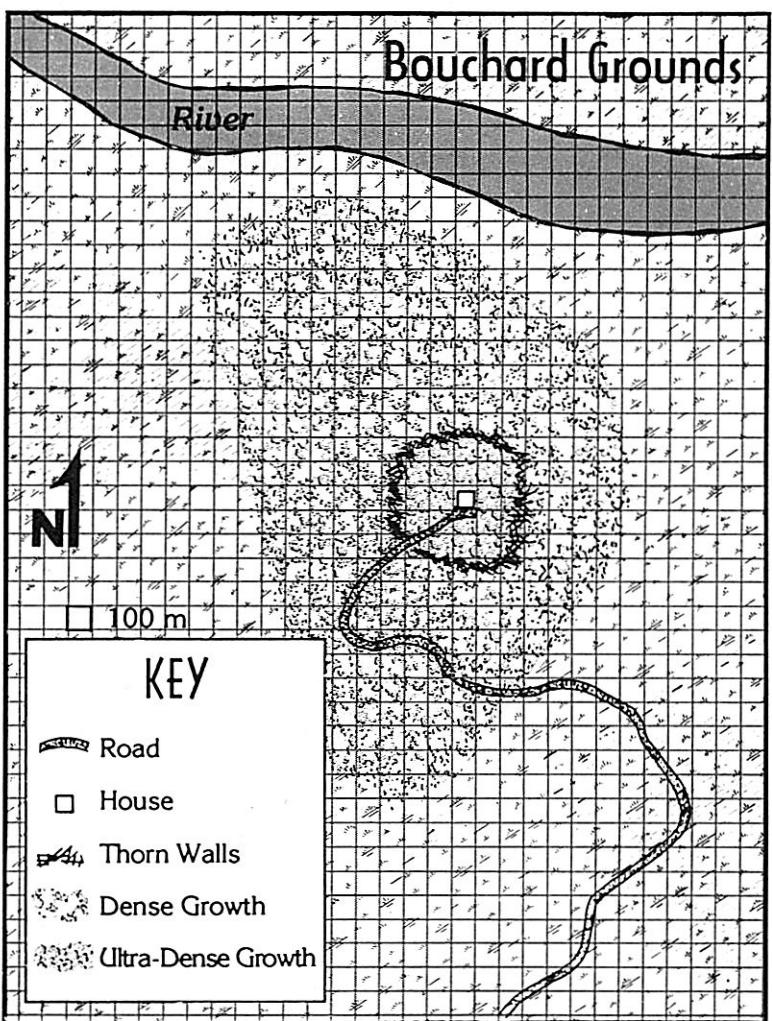
The PCs should at this point think that the house is the source of the evil, not a creature dwelling within it. Focus their attention on the house, how it looks and how it seems to have a personality of its own.

Doing so distracts the PCs enough from thinking about what's inside, so that when they finally do open the doors, their surroundings will be even more alien. The indications that something unearthly is the source of evil will be more of a surprise.

BOUCHARD HOUSE Floor One

Upon entering the house, the characters will be assaulted with a fantastically powerful stench that's a combination of mustiness and rotted vegetation. The floorboards creak loudly with every step—no matter how light—and the walls are bent and warped in places. Debris, consisting mostly of wood particles and plaster, is everywhere.

Most striking are the multitude of plants growing from within the house that overflow outside. A massive tree-like vine structure grows in the center of the house. It has grown from underneath the





house and pushed its way through each of the windows and a few holes in the walls.

1—Main Stairs: These stairs, leading to the front door, are in a near state of collapse. Someone has apparently made repairs to them recently, allowing for a meter-wide path up the center of the stairs to be used without immediate danger of the stairs collapsing.

2—Entry Hall: From here the characters can see most of the first floor, except for the kitchen. The

house, particularly the wallpaper, looks like it has undergone some reconstruction and restoration, but the effort looks like it was cut short.

3—Dining Room: This room has mostly been restored. There is a large dining table here with six chairs around it. The table has been completely restored and looks quite nice. The chairs, however, are only partially restored.

4—Kitchen: The kitchen has been cleaned up, but if the PCs search the pantry and examine the fixtures, they will find out that the kitchen hasn't been used. Apparently, never used at all.

5—Stairs: These stairs lead down to the basement.

6—Porch: Extending from the floor to the ceiling of each of these porches is a vine design done in iron. The metal has long since rusted and partially disintegrated in places. Looking at the wrought-iron vines is eerie with the current backdrop the porch has.

7—Stairs: These stairs lead up to the second floor.

8—Hole in Floor: It is through this massive hole in the floor that the vines grow into, and then out of, the house. It is clear from looking at it that the origin of the vines is in the basement of the house.

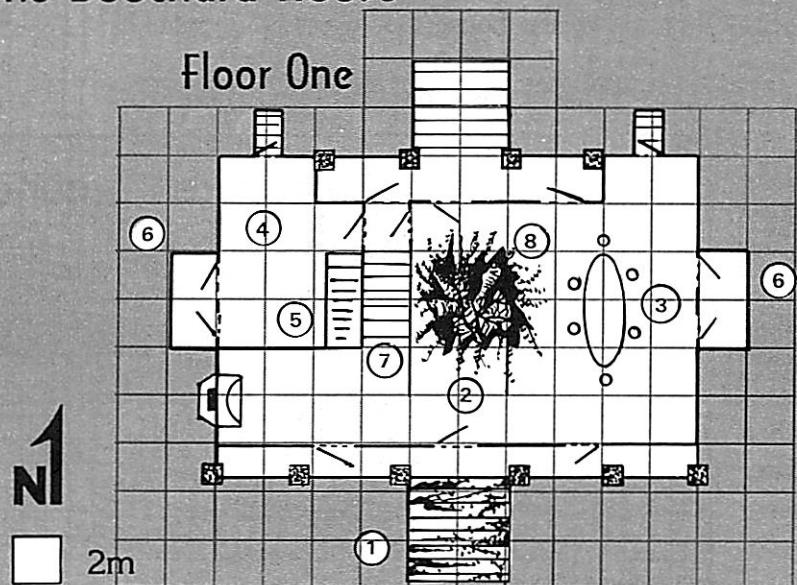
Floor Two

1—Canopy Bed: This bed is the only other piece of furniture in the house that has been completely restored. It looks quite nice and is fit to sleep on.

2—Master Bedroom: This is a simple room with no furniture other than the bed. All of the windows are covered by growth.

The Bouchard House

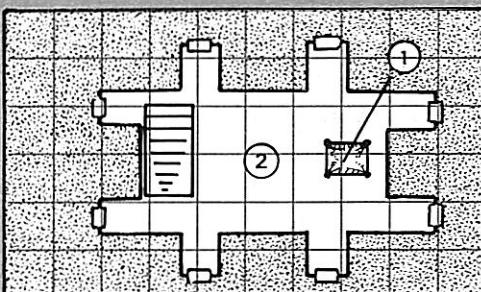
Floor One



KEY

- ▣ Wooden Column
- Door
- Table w/Chair
- ▣ Fireplace
- ||||| Stairs down
- ||| Stairs up
- Window

Floor Two





UNDER HOUSE ENCOUNTERS

Once the player characters descend into the basement, it should be noted whenever there is a zombie guard or other guardian creature in the room. The PCs should run into these creatures before the specific encounter. For example, in the first room of the basement, the characters will have to contend with the six zombie guards before they will have a chance to examine the vine nexus, which is labeled "1" on the map.

Tunnel

The many tunnels that the original house basement is connected to are somewhat like the tunnels the PCs encountered in the sewers. The primary difference is that there aren't as many vines lacing the walls as there were in the sewers and it's not as warm. The average temperature is about 15°C (60°F) throughout.

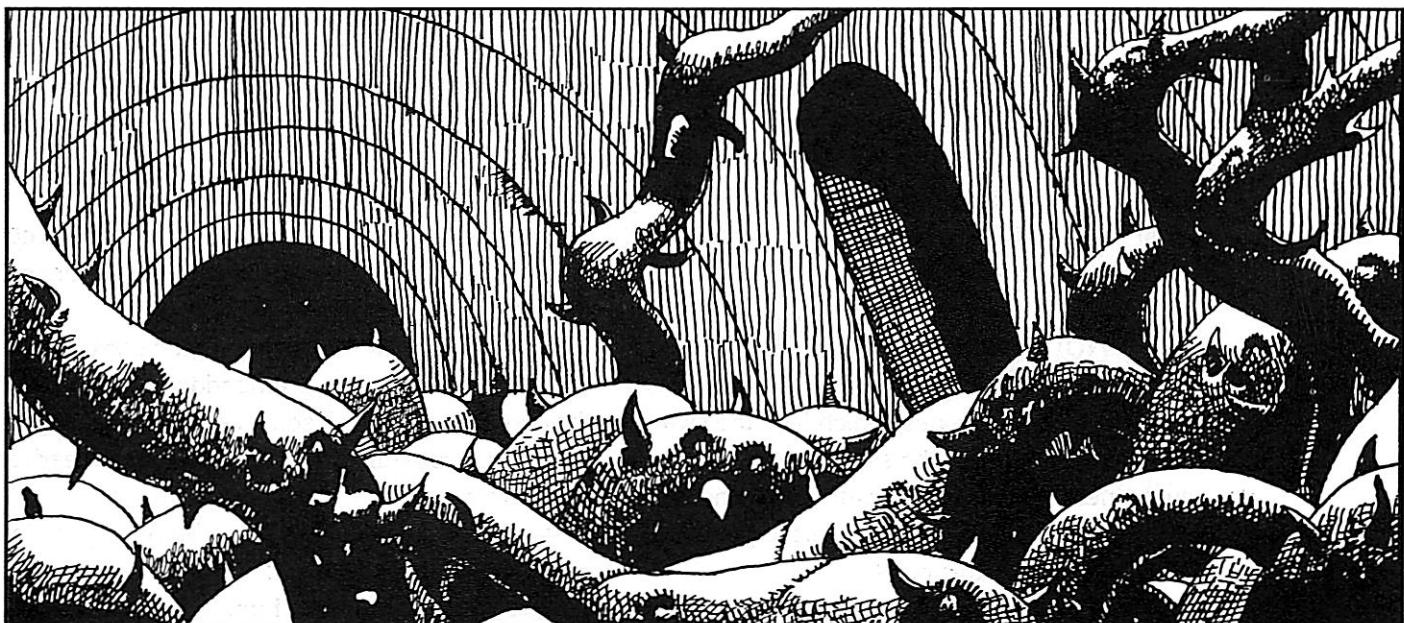
When going through the tunnels, there are a few sensory atmospheric elements the PCs should be aware of. The foremost one is the strange smell. No one has smelled anything like it, but it most resembles oil mixed with sweat. This smell permeates every tunnel, and is more than slightly nauseating.

Second, there's a light source in the tunnels. Every few meters, an eerie glow emanates from an unknown source. It's as if the wall itself was glowing. The color of the lights is almost always dark green. The source can be located anywhere, from eye level on the wall, to the floor, to the ceiling. This creates an interesting effect, since the tunnels themselves are dark green, and so are most of the vines that crisscross the tunnels and chambers. At times, the PCs will have trouble distinguishing where everything is, since there is almost complete uniformity of color with no shadow in some places. The referee should apply modifiers to the characters' tasks as deemed necessary to reflect the effect.

Dark Vine

Stretching and writhing throughout the tunnel matrix and all of the chambers is an intricate vine structure. Hundreds of thousands of vines coil, creep and flow everywhere. However, the vines marked on the map indicate a particular type of dark vine.

These vines are a darker green than the others, and blend well into the greenish light that comes from the tunnel walls. They are covered with one-inch thorns that look more like teeth than anything else. There are tiny pores covering them as well, and





from these pores ooze a slick, black liquid. In these respects, they are like the vines found in the sewers.

They differ in that each one carries a strong and peculiar magnetic field. The field affects all electronics and, of course, compasses. Radios and walkie-talkies are useless due to interference and even mundane devices like digital watches are non-functional.

In addition, each of them is warm. Touching one feels like touching a living animal.

Finally, each vine appears to be breathing. They expand and contract slowly and rhythmically, producing an eerie sight.

The vines are two meters in diameter and have an armor value of 2. They also always occupy the floor of the tunnels.

Zombie Guards

The symbols designating the zombie guards [★] represent the positions of the guards when the PCs first encounter them. The individual abilities and statistics of any zombie or group of zombies should be determined by the referee to ensure a proper challenge for the party.

The statistics and the lists of the zombies are listed in the "Referee Resources" chapter, on page 79.

Other Creatures

These symbols [★] represent a creature that is not a zombie guard, but is an important part of the encounter. The specifics of the creature are listed under the encounter number, so these symbols only appear in chambers where there is a numbered encounter for the PCs.

Numbered Encounters

1—Vine Nexus: This is the central point from which all of the dark vines, which lace the swamp and indeed extend into the sewers, start. The individual vines technically originate from other locations, but they congregate and start to grow out of the basement from this point.

From here, they reach throughout the swamp,

covering hundreds of square kilometers in total. They even reach into the sewers and storm tunnels of New Orleans. Each vine carries with it the empathic awareness of the guiding creature, as detailed on page 70.

2—Holding Chamber: This chamber is difficult to reach because of the dark vine. It houses five human prisoners (three men, one woman and one male child). They are dressed professionally (except for the child), indicating that they are from the city. They are lying on the ground and comatose. Attempts to revive them will be unsuccessful, no matter what method is used.

They cannot be contacted empathically. A character who attempts to do so will only receive impressions of a vast, cold wasteland rather than the warm soul of a human.

Medical examination will reveal that each of them has a purple thorn in the base of his or her neck, just above the collar. The thorn is very small, and only a centimeter long and a half centimeter thick. The thorn cannot be pulled out, as the prisoners are too far along in the subsumption process (see page 70 in the "Referee Resources" chapter for details).

3—Autopsy Room: This chamber contains about 20 humans in varying states of autopsy. All of them are lying face down on the floor with the rears of their skulls removed. If one of the characters is a doctor, it can be determined that some sort of neurological research is going on, particularly in how to adapt human brains to some sort of alien neurological stimulations.

If a Difficult roll versus Medical is made by a doctor, the character can tell that the experiments involve grafting alien brain matter to human brains, thus allowing control over the body.

In all cases, there is a thorn, identical to the ones described in encounter 2, embedded in the back of the human's head. With some cases, more than one thorn is present. All of the humans have been dead for some time.

4—Birthing Chamber: This chamber contains one of the more shocking scenes in the labyrinth of tunnels. In here are several human women with dull,



lifeless eyes, nursing inhuman creatures. The creatures are cerberoid apes (see page 192 of *Dark Conspiracy*). These cerberoids are furless, ape-like creatures, half a meter long. They have eye sockets, but nothing apparently in them. Their tentacles are thin and wispy, and do not look like they are developed enough to pose a threat. They are totally vulnerable, as are the humans nursing them.

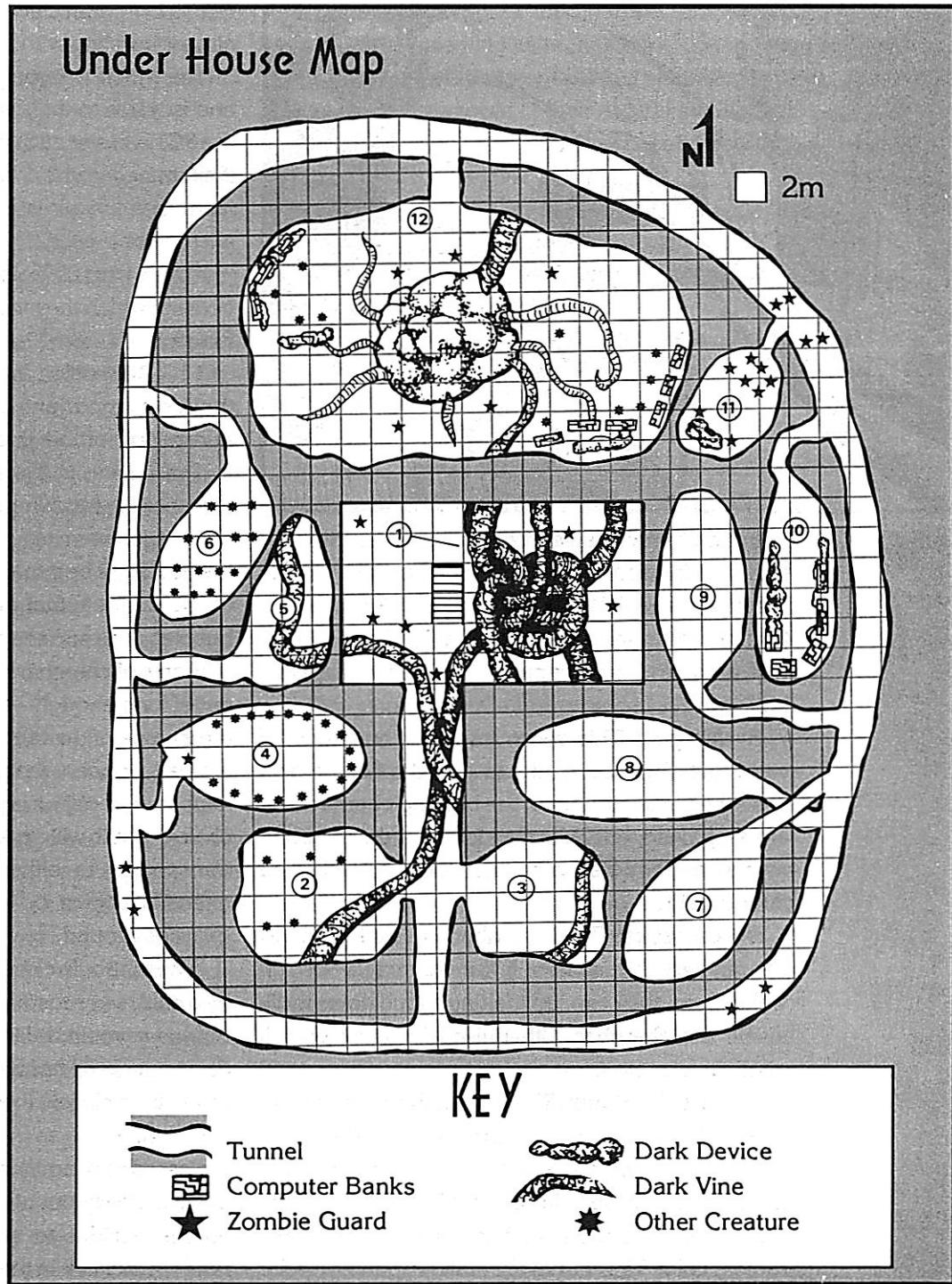
The humans are seated on the floor and on protruding ledges situated around the room. If empathic contact is made with any of them, the effects will be the same as the humans in encounter 2 (the holding chamber). They have thorns embedded in the backs of their necks as well; which cannot be removed.

5—Empty: This chamber is empty except for the dark vine running along its center. There is, however, some fleshy debris on the floor, and it can be surmised this room is some sort of auxiliary autopsy room.

6—Cold Storage: Here are several humans encased in some sort of gelled mucous. The mucous covers them completely and is fantastically resilient. Attempts to cut through the gel are futile, and burning it just makes the gel even tougher.

The only way to breach the gel is to freeze it until it's brittle, then shatter it. The humans inside the gel are dead.

7—Article Storage: Here are the personal effects taken from all the humans who have "visited" here. Included here are clothing and large piles of glasses, wallets, shoes, backpacks and camping equipment.





If the characters search through these things, they will find some very interesting articles. Foremost are two XM22 AIWs (page 291 of *Dark Conspiracy*), several Louisiana National Guard uniforms and two regular US Army sergeant uniforms.

8—Morgue: This room contains hundreds of cerberoids. These are the same kinds of cerberoids described in encounter 4, the birthing chamber. All are long dead, and examination by a doctor won't reveal how they died, other than they probably died during birth.

9—Barracks: The chamber is filled with 50 sleeping zombie guards. If the characters wish to wake them, they can, by making a loud noise while inside the chamber. Otherwise, the zombies will continue sleeping.

10—Device Room: The walls of this chamber are lined with all sorts of sophisticated electronic equipment. Each one seems to be functioning well despite the intense fields put out by the dark vines. The types of equipment here include shortwave radios, color TVs, a mainframe computer, a radar

station (not on) and several consoles whose purpose can't be determined.

If any of these devices are opened, the characters will find the interiors laced with strange red tendrils. Every computer chip and conduit has some sort of red string connected to it. The result is a console almost bursting with red wire.

The wire is thin, only one millimeter in diameter, and is warm to the touch. If a console is left alone, the PCs can see each of the wires twitching slightly. If examined under a microscope, the examiner will learn that the wires are made from some kind of alien neuron cells.

If more than 25% of the wires are pulled or cut, the console which they were connected to will cease to function.

11—Dimension Walk Device: Here is probably the most important device in this lair (hence the number of zombie guards around it).

The device is the size of a Volkswagen "bug" automobile. It's composed of several bulbous sections which seem to have been fused together. There is what might be a main control panel, a small, oval, black surface that rhythmically undulates and bubbles. The surface is cold and clammy.

If any of the characters works with the control panel long enough—about 15 minutes of trial and error—one of the bulbous sections opens to reveal a small wooden chair. If any person (nothing will happen if an object is placed in the chair) sits in the chair, the bulb will close and the person inside will be transported to either a proto-dimension of the referee's choice or to a random location in the swamps around New Orleans.

When the bulb closes, passengers are surrounded by a cold, wet substance that may make them think of what it would be like to be buried alive in gelatin. Passengers will not be able to breathe, but as soon as the bulb closes, they will find themselves at their destination.

Passengers arrive at their destination by being pushed slowly out of an object. For instance, if the referee decides to send the first passenger to a random location in the swamp, that person sees the



bulb close and a few seconds later sees himself or herself slowly pushing his or her way out of a tree trunk.

In addition, anyone going through the device is lightly coated with a resin that hardens quickly when exposed to air. The result is a plastic-like film covering the passenger. It can be rubbed or washed off, but it will cause minor skin irritation for a few days.

The device can be removed, but it weighs three tons. The controls are designed in such a way that only a being with Darkling Empathy can properly operate it. Other creatures can use it (obviously), but will never be able to control the destination point of the passenger.

12—Lair of the Creature: This is where the cause of all the evil in the swamp lives. The creature will attempt to take control of the PCs as soon as they enter the chamber. The Nexus will not try to kill the PCs unless it is in danger or sees some other need to. Since the PCs are human and are obviously skilled enough to penetrate the Nexus' defenses to reach the chamber, the Nexus will sacrifice its minions in favor of capturing the PCs alive. It will strike at characters with high Empathy ratings first, then those who possess the most threatening weapons.

It will start its attacks by attempting to inject a thorn into the back of the necks of all the PCs. If it is unable to do so (because of consecutive misses or the presence of helmets, neck armor, etc.), it will have any minions nearby attack the PCs. Failing that, it will attempt to crush the PCs with its own tentacles by conducting grappling maneuvers (see page 79 of *Dark Conspiracy*) with each of the characters. The Nexus has a total of 30 tentacles (currently functional—it regenerates and newly generates them constantly), two of which are required to grapple with a human—but only one is needed to inject a thorn.

A more detailed description of the Nexus and its abilities and motivations can be found in the "Referee Resources" chapter on page 70 and 72.

Lining the walls of the chamber are dark de-

vices which seem to be used for some kind of information-gathering system. There are normal, unmodified computers standing alongside ones that have been heavily modified with unearthly circuitry.

Scattered throughout the chamber are several zombie guards serving as technicians. The technicians differ in statistics from normal zombie guards in that they retain more of their natural intelligence to make operation of the dark devices and computers easier for the Nexus.

A token number of garden variety zombie guards are also stationed here. They normally serve as errand runners, but could be used to attack the PCs if the Nexus so decides. The Nexus will commit the guards before the technicians, wanting to spare the technicians if possible.

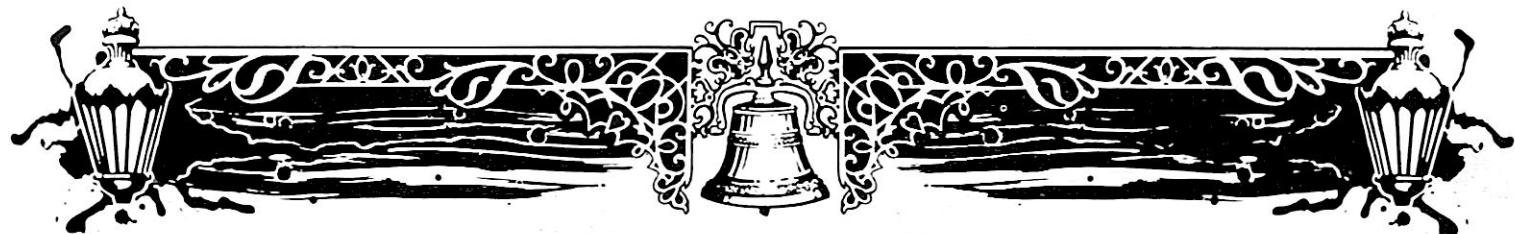
THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD

Killing the Nexus of Evil is a simple task, but one that requires a lot of effort. In all, the characters have to do 500 points of damage to it for it to go into a coma-like state. After that, it will eventually regenerate (like all plants) until it's restored to full health.

To be rid of the creature forever, the PCs will have to totally destroy it. The easiest way to do this is to use the gasoline the Cajuns provide (assuming the PCs waited for them to come back from New Orleans with it). Otherwise, they will have to use their wits.

There is no visual sign of the Nexus regenerating when it first goes into the coma-state. However, if any character with Foreboding stands inside the chamber after the coma starts, that character will still feel the evil emanating from the monster.

The monster's control over its minions will be broken as soon as it loses consciousness. All of the guard zombies will stop whatever they are doing and wander aimlessly around. They will not die until the Nexus dies as well. Until then, they are uncontrolled and will not react to stimuli. So out of touch with reality are they that if one falls down, for instance, it won't make any attempt to get up.



THE NEXUS OF EVIL

Strength: 20 Education: 10 Move: —
Constitution: 100 Charisma: — Skill/Dam: 4†/**
Agility: 8* Empathy: See note Hits: 500
Intelligence: 9 Initiative: 5* # Appear: Unique

†Possesses the following special skills: Animal Empathy 9, Biology 20 (see note), Chemistry 20 (see note), Computer Empathy 8, Darkling Empathy 5, Foreboding 10 (in the form of the extensive vine network), Human Empathy 10, Observation 10 (in the form of the extensive vine network), Plant Empathy (immeasurable—see note), Willpower 10

(Note: These high skill numbers, levels which are unobtainable by humans, reflect the creatures extraordinary ability to manipulate biological matter, and its fantastic knowledge of terrestrial biological and chemical processes. The Nexus of Evil's Plant Empathy—as well as its natural Empathy—rating is virtually immeasurable since there is no limit to what it can do with other plants, nor a limit to its natural potential. Its skill increases with every additional square meter of plant matter that it is able to mutate. Although its natural Empathy rating is immeasurable, how well it is able to execute the Empathy-related skills it has during combat is reflected with a skill rating. For example, although it is in total empathic harmony with its own computers, if the Nexus of Evil tried to establish a new empathic contact with a computer during combat, it would do so as if it had a skill level of 8.)

*For the tentacles. The main body technically has no Initiative, since it has no attacks. The tentacles are quasi-independent and therefore have a collective Initiative of their own. The tentacles cannot panic.

**The only damage is the insertion of the thorn by the tentacle, which causes 1 point of damage. The thorn cannot penetrate an armor value of 1 or greater.

Special: The following abilities are possessed by the Nexus. These skills should *not* be made available to the player characters under any circumstances. These skills are unique to the Nexus of Evil, and cannot be learned by any other creature, human or otherwise.

Mutate Plants (immeasurable). This ability allows the creature to mutate the surrounding swampland. The area it is able to affect is equal to its Plant Empathy skill. Both of these ratings increase by a factor of 1.5 every 24 hours. For example, on its first day of action on Earth, it was able to mutate 1.5 meters of swampland into something it liked better. The next day, it was able to mutate 2.25 square meters, then 3.375, then over 5, etc. The limit to this power is effectively equal to the total plant mass of the planet.

Create Dark Vines 10. By using this ability, the Nexus is able to create dark vines that grow where the creature commands. The vines can extend beyond the Nexus' Mutate Plants radius. The vines are sensitive to sound and empathic transmissions, enabling the Nexus to gather information about the surroundings and about humankind (and specific people) wherever the vines reach. It can produce its skill level in meters per hour with this ability.

Control Humans 10. This skill is tied directly with the thorns it uses. Without a thorn embedded in the subject's neck, the ability is useless. With it, a human undergoes a process of biological and neural subsumption that irreversibly culminates in a total loss of free will. If the Nexus dies, the thorn does as well, but the biological and neural mutations committed on the human subject are irreversible. The Nexus can directly control three times its skill rating in humans simultaneously. In a combat situation, it can only control half its skill level in number, due to the higher demands and stresses of combat (thus it can only control five zombie guards in combat at once).



ENDING THE ADVENTURE



The player characters have killed the Nexus of Evil, saved the swamp and the Cajun community. Since the Nexus is dead, Norleans BioChem will stop dumping pesticide into the swamp. The PCs can go back to their home satisfied with a job well done.

Or can they? In fact, all the PCs have done is maintain the status quo of power in New Orleans, the insectoids, if they did not deal with the insectoids on floor 30 of the corporate headquarters building. In all likelihood, some of them are still alive, and they are still manipulating society to their ends.

AWARDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Since this module will take more than one play session to complete, a point of experience to use for skill improvement should be given to all survivors after each session. If the PCs managed to kill a significant number of grubs or all of the insectoid ETs they encountered, they should be given another experience point. For killing the Nexus of Evil, a final experience point should be awarded.

For each life-threatening battle, remember to award one Initiative experience point. Finally, the referee may wish to review the section on assigning experience points in *Dark Conspiracy* (page 156) to determine if any of the players earned bonus experience points.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

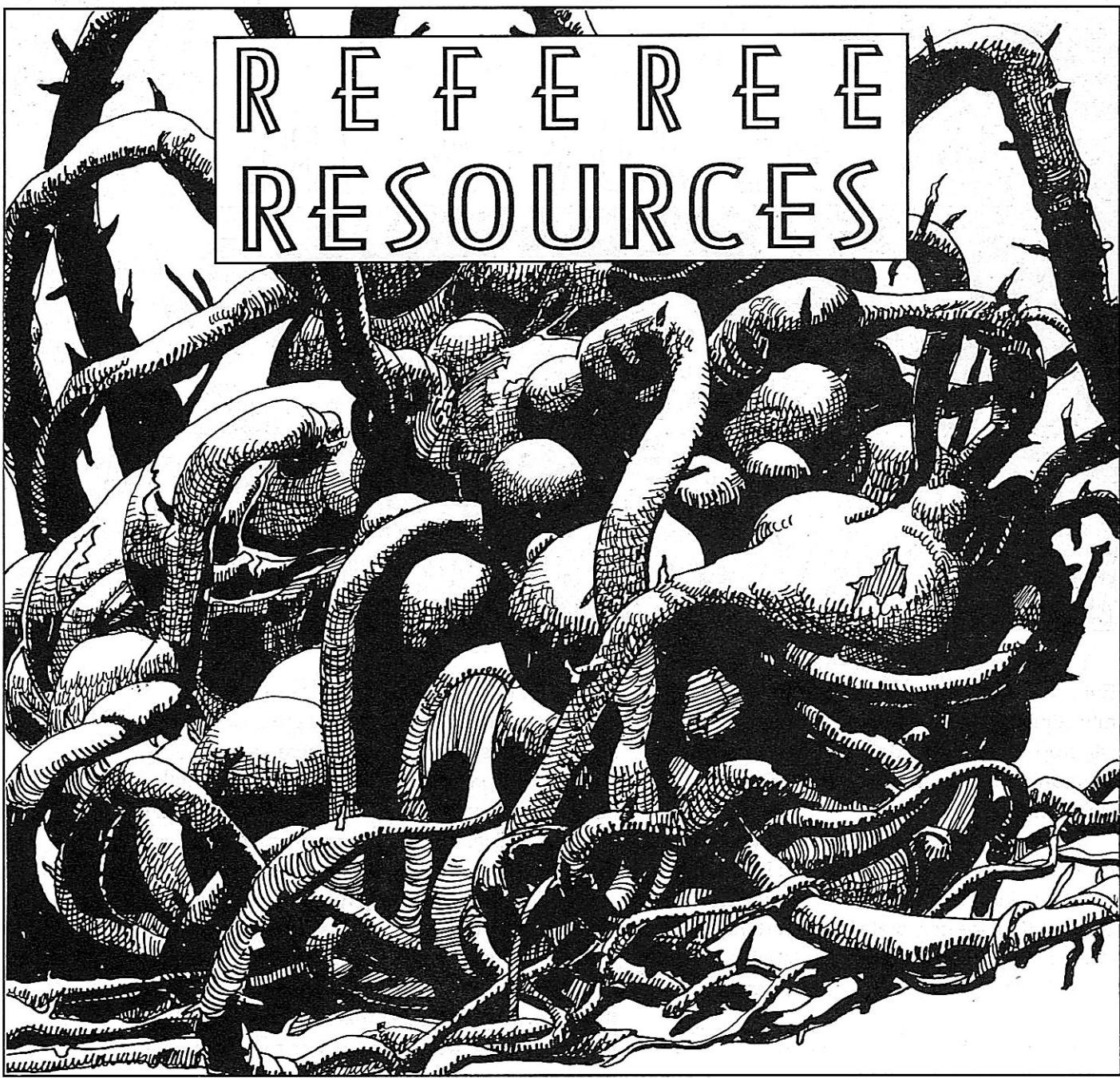
This module is ripe with the potential for continuing adventures. As the PCs saw, there's an extensive insectoid ET presence in New Orleans. Their influence and power are great. Certainly the PCs won't stand by and let their power grow, especially since they now know where to look for them.

New Orleans has a strong voodoo presence in the *Dark Conspiracy* world. The PCs were lucky enough not to come into contact with it during their adventure to discover what happened to Lou. However, there are many dark races that feed on superstitions like voodoo and would love to manipulate humans through that medium...

Ghosts and graveyards are also very popular symbols in New Orleans. Certainly, all of the ghosts and evil spirits reported can't be hoaxes. What if the sightings of ghosts weren't all isolated incidents? What if there are far more ghosts present but unwitnessed? What if, in fact, there was a whole society of ghosts, with a grand conspiracy of their own?

New Orleans, the module, only touched the surface of the available adventure settings. The referee is strongly encouraged to keep the players in New Orleans, so they can experience other facets of the possibility-rich city.

REFEEE RESOURCES



THE NEXUS OF EVIL

The incarnate evil that has been mutating the swamp has no name nor does it have a language or a thought pattern like humans. It doesn't call itself anything, but everyone who comes in contact with it never forgets it. If it were to be classified, it would probably be called the Nexus of Evil.

The Nexus is a massive creature composed of bulbous folds of flesh and plant matter grafted together. It weighs on the order of 10 tons and is immobile. However, this doesn't restrict its influence or power.

Its purpose on Earth is simple: conquer it. Its method is twofold: adapt the environment to allow better control and subsume the population into one mind-set: its own.

Both pursuits are well under way when the player characters come to Louisiana. The Nexus has been able to alter nearly all of the swamp around New Orleans to resemble the mutant plants that are easily manipulated by it. The method by which this is accomplished should be unfathomable to the player characters. Suffice it to say, the Nexus of Evil corrupts the very fabric of nature, and grows more powerful every day.



Infiltration

The creature, in addition to controlling humans and other creatures, controls a network of dark vines that reach for many kilometers from where the Nexus rests. Each and every vine acts as a sensor for it.

The vines are receptive to sound and empathy. By using the vines to receive sound, the Nexus has a living "bug" or listening device. This means the Nexus is aware of everything going on within earshot of any one of its vines.

The vines also receive empathic transmissions. Whenever a person or other creature uses an empathic skill within 10 meters of any of its vines, the Nexus will receive an empathic "impression" of the entity using the empathic skill. By using its vines in this fashion, the Nexus is able to determine who exactly is a threat empathically and is able to track the location of that person to some degree. At the least, it's able to "see" the empathic person coming from miles away.

Mind Control

The most threatening characteristic of the monster is how it controls the minds of its subjects. To initiate mind control, it must inject a thorn-like device into the base of the skull of the intended target. The delivery method for this thorn is one of the tens of tentacles that cover the surface of the monster.

Each tentacle is 10 meters long and acts independently. When the monster encounters a creature it doesn't already control, one of the tentacles whips out at the person. The end of the tentacle contains the mind-controlling thorn. If the tentacle hits, the thorn is embedded and the subsumption process begins immediately. Then it injects the human with a chemical that causes unconsciousness unless the target can roll an Average: Constitution test.

Once the target is unconscious, the thorn begins injecting a chemical which starts to erode certain sections of the brain. The process requires three days to complete, and once completed, the target has lost all Willpower and personal control.

Once the Nexus has gained control, it is able to establish empathic contact with the target directly and automatically. The thorn acts as a conduit for empathic transmissions that the monster uses to control the victim.

After the three-day period of erosion, the thorn is too well in place (both physically and psychically) to be removed without killing the human. In addition, throughout the three-day subsumption period, the ease of removing the thorn decreases. During the first day, the thorn can be removed with a successful Easy: Medical task roll. Day two, the Medical task is Average, and day three it is a Difficult task. After three days, the thorn cannot be removed by any means. Any one character can only try once per day, but any number of different medically skilled people (Medical 3, at least) can each try once per day to remove the thorn.

WAR AMONG THE EVIL

As soon as the Nexus of Evil extended its vines into the sewers of New Orleans to gather intelligence, it knew it had a competitor for fresh bodies in the form of insectoid ETs.

The insectoids have been taking bodies from the streets of New Orleans for years and using them as food for grubs and as parts for biological devices. The Nexus of Evil saw them as a threat to its power in the swamps. Early on, it couldn't do much about them other than gather intelligence on them and monitor their movements. The Nexus had not adopted precise enough control (and still hasn't really) of enough people to conduct any kind of armed aggression against the insectoids.

It therefore decided to wage a different type of war and assault the insectoid's base instead. Perhaps, it thought, it could drive the insectoids out of New Orleans instead of eliminating them.

To this end, the Nexus of Evil took control of some corporate executives. Using the massive amount of information at its disposal, it prompted the executives to make splendid business decisions at the right time, thereby causing them to be promoted



within the corporate structure and gaining more power for the Nexus.

A number of these executives are working the electronic machines in the Nexus' lair. When the PCs enter the room, the executives will try to flee, as the Nexus does not want its efforts to go to waste. Among those executives, of course, is the executive who fled into the swamp away from the battle at the Lake Maurepas pumping station.

The insectoids of New Orleans use a corporation as their headquarters because they are masters of hierarchical structure, and they have found that their mastery extends to running human megacorporations. Because of this, they detected the Nexus' influence in the other companies of New Orleans. One of their own executives, in fact, was taken over by the Nexus.

To retaliate, they decided to destroy their competition. Because of their biological lack of tolerance for the swampland environment, and their inability to control other humans mentally, they decided to use their resources to poison the plant monster.

By examining cell samples of the vines found in their "own" sewers, they were able to determine that the Nexus is indeed vulnerable to common pesticides.

The campaign had begun.

Unfortunately, the insectoids forgot to account for the human factor—namely, Lou's conscience. Other humans, the insectoids knew, were greedy and did what they were told without question if they were paid enough. Lou was the exception, and he blew the whistle.

Unfortunately for the Nexus of Evil, this was a bad thing, because the "wrong" people (the player characters) heard the plea for help. If the player characters kill the Nexus of Evil, then the insectoids have all the reason in the world to celebrate.

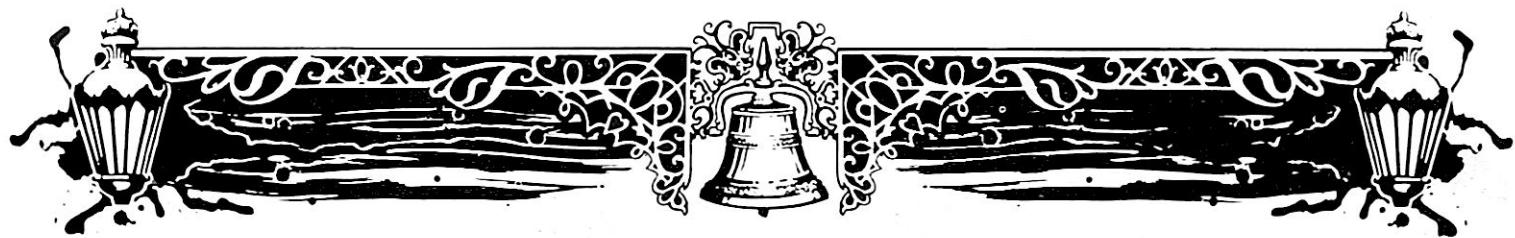
NEW DARKLING EMPATHIC SKILLS

Cryokinesis

Cryokinesis works like Pyrokinesis (page 210 of *Dark Conspiracy*), only in reverse. Instead of heating things, people and objects can be cooled with this Darkling skill. As with Pyrokinesis, the effects are not instantaneous, but have to progress through stages, each stage taking one phase (five seconds) to complete. For example, it would take six phases to kill a creature with Cryokinesis. Concentration has to be maintained during the progression. If the cryokinetic creature suffers a slight wound during the concentration, then it has to make an Easy test versus Willpower to continue with the Cryokinesis. A serious wound means a Difficult check has to be made, and a critical wound automatically breaks the concentration of the cryokinetic creature.

If concentration is broken, the target creature will warm back up at the rate of five minutes per stage inflicted. For example, a PC has been successfully attacked with Cryokinesis for three phases, for a Stage Three success. Suddenly, the insectoid attacking him has its concentration broken, so the PC begins to warm back up. Since a Stage Three success was inflicted on him, it will take him 15 minutes to return to normal body temperature.

Creatures with Pyrokinesis can combat the effects of Cryokinesis. To prevent the cryokinetic effects, the Pyrokinesis-using (or targeted) creature has to achieve an equivalent stage of success with Pyrokinesis as the attacking creature made with



Cryokinesis. The effect is a balance of temperature, and no ill effects are suffered.

For instance, an insectoid with Cryokinesis attempts to freeze a pyrokinetic nukid to death. The insectoid achieves a Stage Three success, and the nukid begins to chill. For its next action, the nukid uses its Pyrokinesis to warm itself back up. The nukid suffers the increased level of difficulty from the Stage Three cryokinetic attack but manages to make a Stage Three success anyway. The nukid has successfully warmed itself back up, and is no longer affected by the Cryokinesis.

- Basic success with this skill allows basic chilling of objects and people. A hot drink can be made into a refreshing cold one at this level, and a person can be made to feel cold enough to want to put on a heavy jacket.

- Stage Two success allows the creature to freeze 20 liters of liquid or cause uncontrollable shivering (which has the effect of reducing a creature's movement rate by half and adds a level of difficulty to all combat tasks) to a target.

- Stage Three success allows the creature to freeze 60 liters of liquid. Creatures affected will have a level of difficulty added against all their task rolls. Movement is reduced by 75% and hypothermia begins to set in.

- Stage Four success will freeze up to 120 liters of liquid, and target creatures will fall unconscious from the lack of body heat unless they make an Average test versus Constitution and succeed. Those who fail will have to succeed at an Easy test versus Constitution or lapse into a coma. Those who remain conscious conduct their tasks at two levels of increased difficulty. Movement is reduced by 90%.

- Stage Five success allows the cryokinetic creature to inflict automatic slight wounds each round to every hit location in the form of frostbite damage and skin trauma. Heavy clothing and armor will not prevent this damage. Two hundred and forty liters of liquid can be frozen solid, and creatures affected are immobilized from the uncontrollable shivering. Creatures have to make checks to see if they fall unconscious (as described in Stage Four successes, above) every round.

- Stage Six success allows the cryokinetic creature to freeze 440 liters of liquid or cause the death of any creature, warm-blooded or not, from lack of body heat. Such a death is not instantaneous. The target creature will automatically lapse into a coma and will die five minutes later unless emergency medical attention is given between the time the coma ensues and death arrives.



NEW BEASTIES AND DARK MINIONS

Apeps, Sewer



Appear: 2D6+3 Initiative: 5 Agility: 10
 Attack: 98% Strength: 6 Skill/Dam.: 4/2D6
 Move: 15/70/100 Constitution: 7 Hits: 10/20

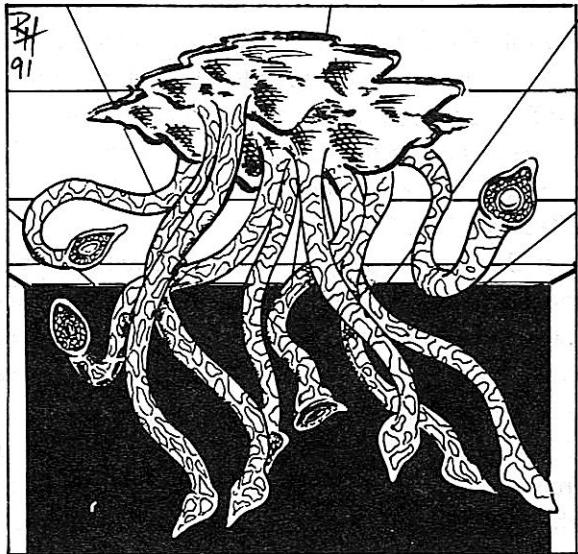
These apeps are kept by the insectoids as guards for the dark tunnels. They have been selectively bred for quick movement through the tunnels and for their keen eyesight, smell and hearing. Because of these heightened senses, they cannot be surprised while in the tunnels (they are too familiar with the normal sounds and smells of the tunnels, and are acutely aware of even the smallest change in their surroundings).

The apeps will attack en masse, but are not intelligent enough to decide on targets. They will slither toward the closest target and attack it until it is dead. An apep will retreat if death is near.

The referee should see page 188 of *Dark Conspiracy* for a more complete description of the apep and its abilities.

Clinging Suckers

Appear: 1-2 Initiative: 3 Agility: 10
 Attack: 80% Strength: 6 Skill/Dam.: 8/1 per turn
 Move: N/A Constitution: 7 Hits: 8/10



Attached to the ceiling and floors of some tunnel sections is a lumpy, slick dark blue creature from which hang two to 20 hollow tentacles. When a warm, living creature passes underneath it, there is an 80% chance that the beastie will whip its tentacles at the prey.

Roll 1D10 and 1D6. The D10 represents the attack roll for the D6 number of tentacles. For example, if the 1D10=5 and the 1D6=3, then three of the clinging sucker's tentacles attack with a roll of 5.

The sucker can attack up to three targets per turn, but its reach only extends for two meters.

If any of the tentacles hit, 1 point of damage is taken to that location per phase. The tentacles suck a combination of blood and other juices from the target to produce the damage. If the roll to attack is over 80%, then the creature has recently fed and will not attack. Tentacles can be detached (yanked out) with a successful Average: Strength check (causing two points of damage as they rip loose). If the creature is killed, all attached tentacles will automatically detach the next phase, causing no dam-



age. This beastie is similar to the sponge on page 198 of Dark Conspiracy.

Cobra People

Strength: 7	Education: 2	Move: 5/10/18/35
Constitution: 4	Charisma: 5	Skill/Dam.: 7/4
Agility: 8	Empathy: 2	Hits: 14/28
Intelligence: 3	Initiative: 5	# Appear: 1D6



Special: Grapple to pin, then poison bite, damage 1p3. Disguise skill at full Charisma value.

These cobra people have been taken over by the Nexus of Evil. They have the Nexus of Evil's thorns embedded in the backs of their necks.

The Nexus has taken them over to use their information and resources to further its aims. As a result, their Intelligence has decreased, but their fighting ability has slightly increased. All of the cobra people encountered by the PCs are well beyond the recoverable stage of subsumption. There is no hope that any of them can ever regain control over their own minds again. It is slightly easier for the Nexus to control cobra people, which is why so many are able to participate in combat under its dominance.

Grubs

Strength: 10	Education: 1	Move: 4
Constitution: 15	Charisma: 1	Skill/Dam.: 8/2D10
Agility: 3	Empathy: 1	Hits: 30/60
Intelligence: 1	Initiative: 4	# Appear: 1D10

Special: None

These grubs differ from the garden variety of flesh-eating extraterrestrial grub in that they are quite long (about 12 feet long) and have substantially more powerful jaws. The grubs can smell flesh from a few meters away, but can smell blood from at least 100 meters. If they smell blood, they will pursue it until they have eaten and are full (which takes about five adult humans or 20 children). They are relentless in their pursuit.

These grubs also have very poor eyesight. They rely primarily on their sense of smell and insectoid tenders (see page 78) to guide them. They can see clearly a meter ahead of them. Because of this, they cannot be distracted by smoke or stun grenades. They are deaf and not subject to the effects of gunfire inside the dark tunnels.



Harpy

Strength: 5	Education: 1	Move: 15/30/50*
Constitution: 3	Charisma: 1	Skill/Dam.: 7/2D6
Agility: 7	Empathy: 3	Hits: 10/20
Intelligence: 2	Initiative: 5	# Appear: Special

*This is flying speed; harpies walk 5 and run 10 when grounded.

Special: Drop heavy objects (treat as thrown weapon attack for 1D10 damage).

Like the cobra people, these harpies have been



taken over by the Nexus of Evil. They have the Nexus' thorns embedded in the backs of their necks. The difference between the cobra people and these harpies is that the harpies' level of subsumption is much greater. The Nexus of Evil has taken such complete control over the harpies that it can even see through their eyes, thus it directly controls their movements with great precision.



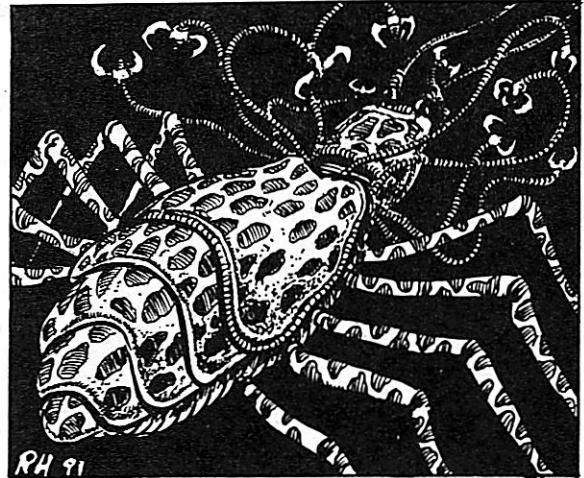
Because of this, each one of the harpies is an agent of the Nexus. It can carry out any instruction or task the harpie is physically capable of doing. The harpies are primarily used for reconnaissance and shock troops when necessary. The attack on the Lake Maurepas pumping station is such an occasion. It is much easier for the Nexus to control harpies, which is why so many are able to participate in combat under its dominance.

Insectoid Tenders

Strength: 9	Education: 3	Move: 6/14/25/35
Constitution: 6	Charisma: 3	Skill/Dam.:7/1D10+1D6
Agility: 7	Empathy: 5	Hits: 15/30
Intelligence: 5	Initiative: 5	#Appear: 1 persix grubs

Special: Armor value 1 (versus all but laser weapons, against which they have no effective armor), Animal Empathy 10 (insects only—see page 219 of *Dark Conspiracy*), Cryokinesis 5, Project Thought 5

These insectoids have been specially bred to tend grubs and to serve as workers and guards. They only barely look like insects and resemble shellfish. They have an oval central body that is seven feet long. Ten legs, segmented in two places, extend from the main body. Rising just a few inches from the center of the top of the main body is a squat head.



Mottled black spots, which serve as eyes, cover the orange-colored body and legs. Because the entire body is covered with eyes, the tenders cannot be sneaked up on. Surrounding the head are 10 three-meter-long tentacles, each ending with an intricate mandible structure, which serve as fingers.

The tender insectoids will attack anything that threatens the grubs they are in charge of. They will not necessarily kill the PCs when they attack, but might instead take them to their leaders at the Norleans BioChem corporate headquarters building for instructions. The insectoids will almost always start attacking with their Cryokinesis skills to allow their grubs the chance to hunt.

Slither, Swamp

# Appear: 1	Initiative: 3	Agility: 3
Attack: 90%	Strength: 30	Skill/Dam.:4/2D10
Move: 6/10/18	Constitution: 40	Hits: 40/80

This beastie is similar to the slither, found on page 196 of *Dark Conspiracy*. The differences lie in its coloration (more suited to hiding in swamps), its quicker movement through swamp terrain than the "normal" slither, and its lesser damage capacity.

Sponges, Swamp

# Appear: 6D6	Initiative: 3	Agility: 2
Attack: 85%	Strength: 10	Skill/Dam.:9/2D10
Move: 2/4	Constitution: 10	Hits: 40/80

These beasties are much the same as the sponges



described on page 198 of Dark Conspiracy. The primary difference is greater capacity to withstand damage and the environment in which they prefer to live.

Wolf-like Creatures

# Appear: 1D6	Initiative: 6	Agility: 9
Attack: 90%	Strength: 6	Skill/Dam.: 7/1D10+2
Move: 15/35/70	Constitution: 5	Hits: 6/10

These wolves are the result of a combination of



genetic experimentation and the further mutations to animal life caused by the pesticides dumped into the swamp. The wolves were engineered by an unknown company and released into the swamp after their experiments were done. After that, the enhanced wolves fed on the small animals that were mutated by already mutated vegetation (caused by the Nexus of Evil and the insectoid pesticide).

This chain of unrelated events led to a ferocious, although small, pack of mutated wolves. These wolves are in a rabid state (though not infected with rabies), and will attack anything living they see almost instantly, and will give chase until one of their number is subdued, whereupon they will flee.

Zombie Guards

Strength: 8	Education: —	Move: 2/8/15/30
Constitution: 6	Charisma: —	Skill/Dam.: 7/1D10+2
Agility: 5	Empathy: —	Hits: 15/30
Intelligence: —	Initiative: 6	# Appear: (as indicated on the map on page 67)

These former humans are under the total control

of the Nexus of Evil. As such, their statistics reflect how well the Nexus controls their muscles. The Nexus' extreme biological knowledge and total control mean that it can direct blows in precise locations to deliver maximum damage.

None of the zombies are armed with weapons, as the Nexus of Evil finds it easier to conduct combat with bare fists and kicks. In addition, the Nexus can only control up to five zombies at once *in combat*. If there are more than five zombies in a chamber with the PCs, and there is combat going on, then the remaining zombies will lie prone on the floor until summoned. While prone, they are one level more difficult to hit with ranged weapons unless the firer is at close range, where lying prone yields no benefit.

The guards will attack until killed.

An important thing to remember is that *any* human that has been taken over by the Nexus of Evil can be used as a zombie guard. As soon as it is employed in such a manner, it has the statistics noted above.



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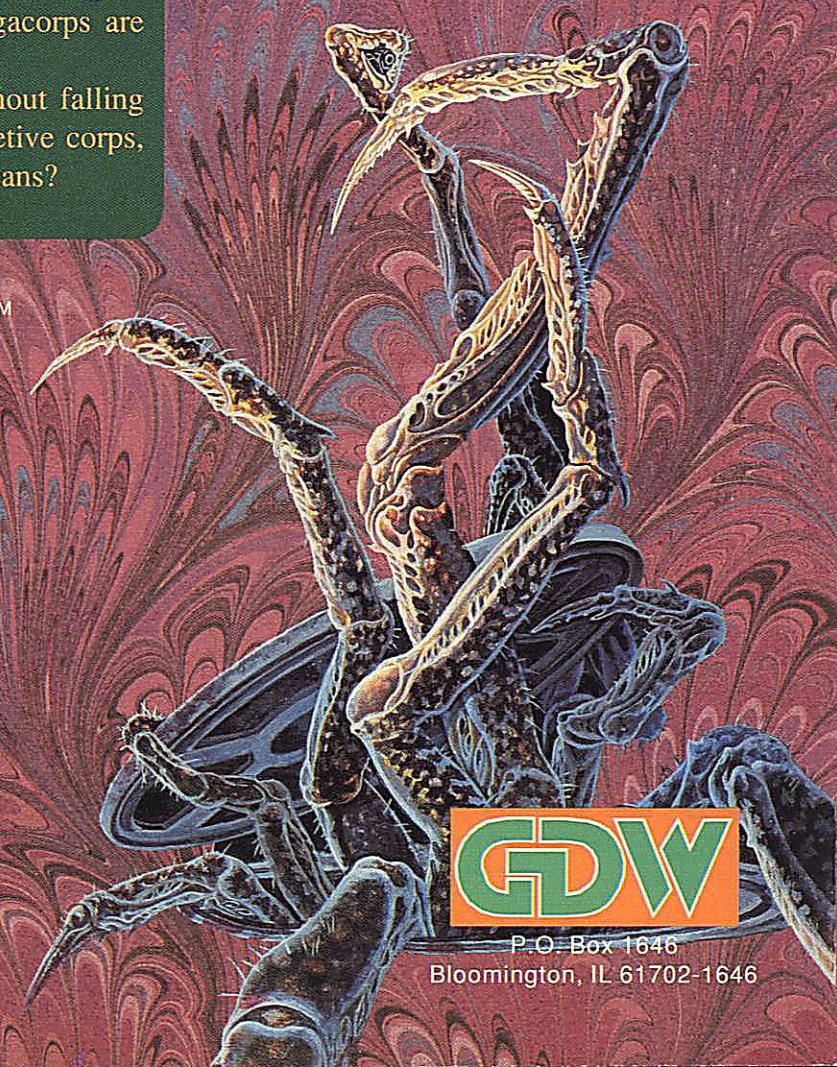
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